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FAME AND FORTUNE

STORIES OF BOYS WEEKLY WHO MAKE MONEY.

ED, THE EXPRESS BOY, OR, HIS OWN ROUTE TO FORTUNE.

By A SELF-MADE MAN.



When he reached the end of the bridge the frightened horse swerved from his course, brushed down the frail fence, and dashed into the creek. Ed had barely time to spring out of the wagon when the rig struck the water.

Fame and Fortune Weekly

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY

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PRICE 5 CENTS.

Ed, The Express Boy

OR,

HIS OWN ROUTE TO FORTUNE

By A SELF-MADE MAN

CHAPTER I

HOW ED GOES TO THE AID OF A SEA NYMPH.

"Hello, Ed, what are you doing down here at this time in the morning?" asked Bob Sedgwick, looking at his friend, Ed Andrews, in some surprise.

"Watching the bathers," replied Ed, carelessly.

"Watching the bathers, eh? That's something new for you. At this hour you're usually going around taking orders for your uncle."

"Not taking any this morning," said Ed, with a frown.

"I see you're not. What's up? Been having a run-in with the old man again? Must be something serious this time."

"You've hit it, Bob; and it is serious."

"What's the trouble?"

"Mr. White lost or mislaid a pocketbook this morning which he said contained two hundred and fifty dollars. He accused me of taking it."

"Accused you?"

"Yes. He acted as crazy over his loss as the Wild Man of Borneo. He made me go to my room with him and open my trunk so he could search it."

"Did he find his pocketbook in it?" chuckled Bob.

"I should say not; but he found ten dollars I had saved up, and he took it."

"He did! What right had he to do that?"

"No right; but that doesn't make any difference with him. I kicked, of course, and demanded my money back.

He refused to return it. He said he believed I had stolen it, a little at a time, from the store till."

"Gee! That's rubbing it in on you. He didn't really mean that, though."

"He acted as if he did. At any rate, he used it as an excuse to freeze on to my savings."

"He's always treated you pretty mean."

"And his wife is as like him as one pea is to another."

"Too bad your real aunt died. She always took your part."

"Yes. She was the only friend I had after my father went West to make his fortune."

"He died out in the wilds without making it, I think you told me."

"Yes. He was doing pretty well, so aunt told me, and used to send Mr. White regular monthly remittances to pay for my clothes and keep; but he was persuaded to go off prospecting in the Southwest with two or three friends, and the party was caught in a terrible snowstorm somewhere in the mountains of Colorado, and all perished."

Ed always looked very solemn and sad when he spoke of his father or mother, and so Bob changed the subject.

"When your uncle wouldn't give up your ten dollars what did you say to him?"

"I told him flatly that I wouldn't do another stroke of work for him till he gave me back my money."

"He wouldn't return it so you quit and came down here?"

"That's right."

"Going to stay away all day?"

"I'll go back at dinner time and see whether he's changed his mind. It is possible he will have found his pocketbook by that time, in which case I may get my money back."

"S'pose he hasn't found his wallet, and won't give you back your money?"

"I won't go back to work till he returns my funds."

"He might turn the screws on you."

"How?"

"Keep you out of the house till you yield."

"Then I'll take my trunk and leave him for good."

"Where will you go?"

"I don't know."

"He might not let you take your things. You're pretty useful to him, and he won't want to lose you."

"I don't care what he wants. The idea of him charging me with taking his pocketbook when he hasn't got the least bit of evidence against me, and then on top of all, robbing me of my savings, for it is robbery for him to seize what does not belong to him. If he dares to stop me from taking my trunk, if it comes to that, I'll go to the justice and make a complaint against him."

"Well, Ed, if you have to get out, fetch your trunk over to my house. My folks like you, and they'll let you stay with me till you look around."

"Thanks, old man, that's kind of you to invite me, but I hope I will not be obliged to take advantage of your offer."

"Don't fail to do it if matters come to a crisis with you. I've got to get on now. I've got a message to take over to my aunt. I'll drop in at the store this afternoon to see if you've gone back to work."

Thus speaking Bob walked off, leaving his friend seated on a low bluff overlooking the broad Atlantic, which at this point curved into the sandy shore with a bold sweep, forming the shallow harbor of Rockhaven, that of recent years had come into some local prominence as a summer resort.

It was now about ten o'clock, and there were a number of bathers, mostly of the fair sex, gamboling and swimming about in the light surf.

There was one in particular who had attracted special notice from Ed.

She was a perfect little beauty, both in face and figure, and about sixteen years of age.

She was the most graceful little swimmer he had ever seen, and she could dive like a porpoise.

She was more daring than the others, would go out as far as the end of the life-line, and hang there with her feet beating in the heaving water, apparently enjoying the sensation; but was always immediately recalled by a well-dressed gentleman on the shore, who appeared to be her father.

Ed admired her antics greatly, because he was a first-class swimmer himself.

He'd have given anything for the honor of her acquaintance, and the privilege of swimming around with her.

But she was far removed from his humble sphere in life, for she appeared to be a young lady of some considerable social standing, which indicated that her parents were well off.

At length she came out of the water and stood talking to her father.

Evidently he thought she had been in long enough, for he pointed to the bathing-houses and laid his hand on her shoulder, as if urging her to go in and dress.

She objected, and danced around him in a frolicsome way.

Finally she tagged him and ran toward the bluff on which Ed sat a little distance out from the beach.

The gentleman chased her, but stood no chance of overtaking her.

The lower part of the bluff was composed of bare rocks, piled up in a confused line, running out for some distance.

At this point there was a dangerous undertow, of which all the bathers had been warned.

In addition there was a sign stuck at the foot of the rocks with the word "DANGER" in capital letters.

Ignoring the sign the girl began to clamber up the rocks, laughing in high glee at having outwitted her father, and then started to scamper out over them.

Her father shouted to her in a tone of great concern.

"Come back, Dora, come back."

She paid no attention, but mounting the highest rock in the bunch made a motion as if she intended diving off it.

Ed, knowing the peril of that place, sprang on his feet and shouted to her.

She turned around and looked up at him, apparently thinking he had a great nerve to address her.

Seeing that she disregarded his call, he hurried further out on the bluff to watch her in case she did jump in.

"Dora, Dora, don't jump," cried her father, anxiously.

The girl apparently wished to tease him, and made another bluff to dive.

This time she leaned a little too far over, her shapely foot slipped on the rock, and she pitched downward in an ungraceful way, striking the water awkwardly with a splash, and disappearing under the surface.

Her father, in great dismay, rushed up on the rocks, and when he reached the top of them he saw to his horror his child rise for a moment, without movement, a streak of blood showing across her forehead, where she had grazed a rock under the water.

Then she was borne oceanward by a receding wave.

Ed saw all that the distracted father did, only plainer, for he was directly above the girl.

He perceived that she was unconscious, and that unless a good swimmer went to her aid she would soon be drowned.

There was no good swimmer near enough to be of any use but himself.

Throwing off his jacket, and kicking off his shoes, he dove straight down into the sea, and struck out for the imperiled girl.

CHAPTER II.

IN WHICH ED SAVES THE SEA NYMPH.

The girl's father was filled with agony.

Though no swimmer he was on the point of plunging into the sea after his child when he saw Ed launch himself from the top of the bluff.

"Save her, oh, save my Dora!" cried the gentleman, wildly.

Ed didn't hear his appeal.

It would not have urged him to greater effort if he had.

Already he was cleaving the water like a fish in the wake of the pretty miss.

The waves, however, were bearing her out almost as fast as he was going himself, aided by the sweep of the water.

Already both were beyond the end of the bluff, and the case looked kind of desperate.

It is doubtful if Ed could have saved her had she not recovered consciousness and made some effort herself to keep on the surface.

She was in no condition, nor had she the strength to save herself.

She saw Ed at last trying to reach her, and began swimming feebly toward him.

No one knew better than herself that her hope lay in him.

At last he reached her.

"Don't catch me," he said. "I'll save you."

"I will do as you say," she replied, making no move to grapple him.

Seeing that he had a reasonable creature to deal with, Ed felt that half the battle was already won.

"Put your arms around my neck, miss, behind me, and hold on, I'll do the rest," he said.

Dora obeyed, feeling perfect confidence in the brave boy who had come to her rescue.

Ed then struck out for the shore, taking long and easy strokes.

Dora's father had watched Ed's efforts to save his daughter with mingled hope and anguish.

He feared that the boy's plucky efforts would be fruitless.

For awhile he had lost sight altogether of his child, and his heart stood still as he pictured her lifeless body floating out to sea.

But following the boy's head with his eyes he at last made out Dora's face on the surface of the water only a short way ahead.

Then he saw the two heads come together.

"Brave boy! Noble boy!" breathed the agitated father. "He has reached her. And now he is bringing her ashore. No reward will be too great for me to bestow on him for rescuing my darling."

The tide being against Ed, he came on but slowly with his precious burden clinging to his neck.

But he took his time, and husbanding his strength, for he needed all his energy in this crisis.

He aimed for the end of the bluff, as the nearest point, though the tide ran strong there.

The gentleman made his way there to give him a helping hand when he came within reach.

The rocks ran out into the water here, and before he was quite up to the point he felt them underneath.

They were too slippery to trust, and the undertow was very strong, so he kept on swimming till he got close in.

"Give me your hand, my brave lad," said the gentleman, reaching out.

Ed, who was well nigh exhausted, did so, and he was dragged out of the water onto the rocks.

"Oh, father, father!" cried Dora, disengaging herself

from Ed, and springing into the gentleman's arms. "I am safe."

"Thank heaven, my darling, you are," he replied, straining her to his heart.

Then he turned to Ed, who was leaning, all done up, against one of the rocks.

"Young man, you have saved my daughter's life, and I am very grateful to you," he said.

The boy made no answer.

It was too much of an effort for him to open his mouth.

The excitement of saving the girl having passed, the reaction had set in and Ed felt as weak as a cat, and looked as white, almost, as the collar he wore.

Dora was not near so bad as he.

She had been resting during his swim, and felt almost as chipper as when she went overboard.

She looked at her preserver, and taking his inert hand in her shapely ones, said:

"You saved my life, and I shall remember you as long as I live."

Then she noticed how fagged out he looked.

"Father, we must help him to the shore. He looks terribly exhausted," she said.

"Thank you, miss, I'll be all right soon," replied Ed, in a whisper.

He sat down on a rock and leaned his head against it.

"Poor boy!" said Dora, sympathetically. "He might have lost his life trying to save me. Run and get some brandy, father; I'll stay with him."

"It isn't necessary," said Ed. "Let me rest awhile and I'll come around. The tide was hard to buck against, that's why I'm so used up."

In a few minutes Ed said he was ready to go on to the beach.

"Before we go tell me your name, my lad," said the gentleman.

"Ed Andrews."

"My name is George West, and this is my daughter Dora. I am glad to reward you handsomely for saving my child."

"I don't want to be paid."

"I'm not going to pay you; I couldn't do that if I tried. But I'm going to make you a present. Here, take this as evidence of what I mean to do for you."

He pressed a roll of bills into Ed's fingers.

"No, sir; I'd rather not take any money from you," objected Ed.

"You must take that. It isn't much. You have ruined your clothing, and you will have to get a new suit."

"These are my old clothes I've got on, and they aren't worth much. A ten-dollar bill will get me a much better suit."

"Keep the money, anyway. It'll come in handy for you."

The last sentence brought to Ed's mind his rather doubtful situation at his uncle's store, and the possibility of him being obliged to get out into the world and hoe his own row.

It struck him that a little money would come in handy under the circumstances.

"Well, sir, I'll borrow it of you. That's the condition under which I'll accept it," he said.

"Nonsense! I intend to give you a great deal more than that," said Mr. West.

"No, sir; I don't want anything for saving your daughter. It was my duty to do that if I could."

"Let him borrow it, father, if he wants to have it that way," interposed Dora, feeling a strong interest in Ed, and greatly pleased at his delicacy.

She was sure he was a nice boy, and it was a great satisfaction to her to feel that she owed her life to one whose sentiments seemed to be above the common.

Mr. West yielded the point, though it was not at all likely that he intended the money should ever be returned to him.

The matter having been settled to Ed's satisfaction, he shoved the roll in his pocket, intending to count it later on.

The outside bill was a ten-dollar one, and he judged from the size of the wad that it must amount to one hundred dollars.

That was a lot of money in his estimation, and he felt rich to have it on his person.

The three then walked over the rocks to the beach.

"You'd better go home at once, my boy, and change your clothes," said Mr. West. "Tell me where you live so that I can call on you when I return from Boston."

"I live with my uncle, Abel White. He keeps a general store on Main street."

The gentleman wrote down Mr. White's name and occupation in his memorandum book.

"My wife and daughter are stopping at the Wave Crest Cottage at present. Mrs. West is something of an invalid, and is not able to get around much. She will desire to thank you for the priceless service you have rendered Dora, so you must call there this afternoon if possible," he said.

"I may be busy this afternoon," replied Ed, thinking that perhaps he might go back to work if things got straightened out at the store.

"Then call this evening after supper."

"Do," begged Dora. "Won't you?"

To refuse to do anything that so charming a girl as Dora West asked of him was not to be thought of, so Ed agreed to call that evening.

Indeed, he was secretly delighted at the idea of visiting the young lady, for she had made a most decided impression on him.

It was a pleasure to feel that he had rendered her a great service, for which she was evidently grateful, but he did not expect to see her again after she left Rockhaven and returned to her home.

He walked a short distance up the beach with his new friends, and then started for the store to change his clothes, feeling rather dubious about the reception he might receive from his uncle, whose business had suffered considerably through his absence, not to speak of the pocketbook episode.

CHAPTER III.

ED IS ARRESTED.

Abel White was behind the counter waiting on a customer when Ed looked in at the front door, and there were two other customers standing around, one of whom was a boy who was sampling a box of dates that the storekeeper

had opened that morning, and incautiously left exposed within reach of a pilferer.

Ed concluded not to face his uncle then, so he went around to the back of the house to reach the stairs that way.

He had to pass through the kitchen, and he expected to meet Mrs. White there.

She had sharp ears, though no sharper than her tongue, and she knew his step the moment she heard it.

"Where have you been all mornin'?" she demanded acidly, when he stepped into the room where she was preparing the noon meal.

"Down at the shore," replied Ed.

"Oh, you have. For the land's sake, what have you been doin' to yourself? You look as if you'd been in the water."

"I have. I jumped in to save a young lady from drowning."

"You saved her, I s'pose?"

"I did."

"And sp'iled your clothes. What did you leave the store for? Don't you know you had to go out and take the orders?"

"I'd have done it if Mr. White had given me back the ten dollars he took out of my trunk."

"He thinks that money belongs to him."

"He has no right to think any such thing. Did he find his pocketbook?"

"No, he didn't," snapped the woman. "Peers to me you ought to give that book up. If you don't you'll be put in jail."

"Why, White can't put me in jail without proof that I stole his wallet. As I didn't steal it, I'm not likely to go to the lock-up."

"I thought you was there by this time."

"You did? What made you think that?"

"Because Abel sent for the constable and told him to hunt you up."

"That was a mean thing for Mr. White to do. It shows that he hasn't got much feeling for me, though his first wife was my aunt."

"And ain't I your aunt, too? Though I reckon you ain't no great honor to me. A boy who will steal a pocketbook full of money from his uncle will do wuss," and the speaker glared at Ed.

"So you believe I took it, too?"

"Who else could have taken it but you? Abel accidentally left it in the store this mornin', and there wasn't no one in there but you."

"There were a number of customers."

"They wouldn't take it."

"How do you know one of them wouldn't take it if the temptation was put in his way?"

"They wouldn't dare."

"Well, I don't say any of them took it. I'd hate to think that anybody who deals with us is so dishonest. I feel sure that Mr. White mislaid it, and will find it when he looks in the right place."

"Abel knows where he left it, and it wasn't there when he went back for it."

At that moment, Abel White, who had heard Ed's voice through the back door of the store, appeared with a black look on his wrinkled countenance.

"So you've got back, eh? Where have you been?"

Ed told him.

"Well, I've hired a new boy."

"That's as much as to say that you don't want me any more," said Ed.

"I don't want no thief around my place."

"You have no right to call me one without some evidence."

"You took good care to hide the evidence."

"All right. Since you are determined to condemn me unjustly, I'll take my trunk and leave your house."

"No, you won't take nothin'. And you won't leave, nuther, till the constable takes you away," said the storekeeper, in a determined tone.

"Look here, Mr. White, if you think to ride rough-shod over me you'll find yourself mistaken. I'm going to my room to change my clothes, then I shall pack my trunk. Some time this afternoon I'll send around for it. If you refuse to let it go, I'll lodge a complaint against you with the justice."

"You will, eh?" replied the storekeeper, showing his teeth.

"I will. You've sat on my neck for a good many years, but there is a limit to everything. I shall make my own way in the world after this."

"I guess not. You'll go to jail for stealin' my pocketbook. If you want to give it up now before the constable comes, I'll let you off, and you can go to work in the store ag'in, but I'll deduct from your pay the fifty cents I'll have to pay the boy for goin' around for the orders."

"And you'll return me that ten dollars you took out of my trunk?"

"I'll think about that."

"I'll wager you'll return it if I have you up before the justice," said Ed.

"How dare you threaten me!" roared the old man, glaring at his nephew.

"I'm only telling you what you may expect if you keep my ten dollars."

"I reckon that money belongs to me. If you're bad enough to steal a pocketbook with two hundred and fifty dollars in it, you're bad enough to steal from the money drawer. At any rate, I've missed money one time or another."

"I don't believe you ever missed a cent. If you had you'd have kicked like a steer at the time, and everybody in the house would have known about it."

"You remember me speakin' to you about my missin' change from the till, don't you, Maria?" he said to his wife.

"You never said nothin' to me about it that I kin remember," replied Mrs. White, who, whatever her faults, wouldn't lie to oblige her husband.

"I reckon your mem'ry must be gettin' bad, Maria," said Mr. White, disappointed because she hadn't backed him up.

"My mem'ry is as good as yours, and mebbe better," retorted his wife, tartly.

"Women ain't got a head as good as a man," snorted the storekeeper.

"I want to know," said Mrs. White, sarcastically.

Ed took advantage of their wordy scrap to slip upstairs to his room.

Neither observed his departure, and they were beginning to have it hot and heavy when a customer entered the store, and Mr. White had to retire from the field to wait on him.

Ed removed all his wet clothes, put on dry ones, and was about to count the roll of money he had received from Mr. West, when he heard steps on the stairs.

He returned the money to his pocket, and was in the act of opening his trunk when the door opened and in walked his uncle and Jones, the constable.

"How do you do, Mr. Jones?" said Ed, politely.

"How do you do, Ed? I suppose you know that your uncle charges you with taking his red pocketbook, in which he says there was two hundred and fifty dollars?"

The constable's tone was friendly, for he liked Ed Andrews, and did not believe him capable of theft.

"I ought to know it by this time, Mr. Jones. He ought to be ashamed of himself for accusing me of stealing when he hasn't got any proof against me."

"He believes you took his wallet, for he's sworn out a warrant against you, and the justice gave it to me to serve," said the constable.

"Then you've come here to arrest me?" said Ed, flushing up.

"That's about the size of it, though I regret that my duty compels me to do it," replied the constable. "You will be examined before the justice this afternoon, and if Mr. White can't show good cause for having you arrested, you can sue him for defamation of your character."

"What's that?" exclaimed the storekeeper, feeling as if somebody had poured cold water down his back. "Sue me?"

"Yes," replied the constable. "You have charged the boy with stealing your pocketbook. You must be able to produce better evidence than your mere belief that he took it, or you are likely to get into trouble if he should take the matter up with a lawyer."

Mr. White was aghast at this unexpected phase of the case.

"I ain't got no real proof ag'in him," he faltered; "but I don't know anybody else who could have taken it."

"I have been instructed to tell you to appear against him at two o'clock or he'll be discharged."

"Mebbe it ain't worth while takin' him in till I get some evidence."

"I've got to execute the warrant."

"I'll withdraw the charge for the present," said the storekeeper, nervously.

"You'll have to go before the justice to do that."

"I can't do that now. I ain't got nobody to 'tend store. Mrs. White is cookin' dinner and can't leave the kitchen."

"You can do it at two o'clock."

"All right. You needn't arrest my nephew, then."

"I've got to arrest him on the warrant."

"Spose'n I can't prove he took my pocketbook?" said the old man, evidently ill at ease.

"The justice will discharge him."

"Kin he sue me, then?"

"That will depend. If you had him arrested unnecessarily——"

"But I'm willin' to wait till I get more evidence."

"Then you've got some evidence against him?"

"I dunno. I found ten dollars in his trunk when I searched it."

"That was money I have been saving up," interposed Ed. "I shall ask the justice to make him give it back to me."

"Hadn't you better search his clothes?" said Mr. White. "He may have the pocketbook on him now. He told me he was goin' to pack his trunk and take it away this afternoon. That looks kind of suspicious."

The constable looked inquiringly at Ed.

"There's nothing suspicious about me taking my trunk away when he told me he had hired a new boy and didn't want a thief around the house. That looks as if I had to move, doesn't it?" said Ed.

"If there's any searching to be done, I'll do it at the lock-up, not here," said the constable.

Ed thought of the roll of bills in his pocket, but he was not worried, for he knew he could account for the money being in his possession.

"I'm ready to go with you, Mr. Jones," he said.

"Come on, then. You'll be just in time to dine with me."

So Ed and the officer walked off leisurely together, and though they passed many people on the street who knew Mr. Jones and his vocation, there was nothing in the manner of either that gave them the least suspicion that the boy was a prisoner.

CHAPTER IV.

ED IS BROUGHT BEFORE THE JUSTICE.

The lock-up was next door to Mr. Jones' cottage.

It consisted of a small office and three strong rooms with iron doors and barred windows, all on one floor.

In the rear of this building was a barn where the constable kept his horse and light wagon.

Jones took his prisoner into his office.

He opened a book that he took from a drawer of his desk.

In it he entered Ed's name, address, occupation, the charge against him, the name of his accuser, etc.

"Now," he said, "it is my duty to search you. You may hand me whatever you have in your pockets, and I will put them down in the book."

"Very well," said Ed. "To begin with, here is a roll of money. Count it, please, for I haven't had a chance to do that yet."

The constable looked astonished.

"This isn't the money——"

"My uncle claims he lost? No. It's my own, and, fortunately, I can prove it. I saved the life of a young lady at the beach this morning, and her father loaned me that money."

"Loaned it to you?"

"He wanted to give it to me, but I wouldn't take it except as a loan. As I didn't know but I'd have to leave the store after the charge my uncle made against me, I thought it would be well to have a little money to fall back on," said Ed.

The constable counted the roll.

"There is two hundred and fifty dollars here—exactly the amount your uncle says was in the pocketbook he lost. Rather singular coincidence, isn't it?" said the officer with a frown.

"I admit that it is, but as long as I can account for it, what's the difference?" replied the boy.

"You say that you saved a young lady's life at the shore, and her father gave or loaned you this money?"

"Yes."

"They are summer visitors, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"Where are they stopping?"

"At the Wave Crest Cottage."

"That's one of those tony boarding places down near the shore. What is the gentleman's name?"

"George West, and his daughter's name is Dora."

"Tell me how you saved the young lady," said the constable in a tone of interest.

Ed related the incident.

"By George! That was a plucky thing for you to do. You are evidently a good swimmer or you couldn't have done it."

"I can swim as good as any boy around here, and better than most."

"Well, hand me whatever else you have in your pockets."

Ed did so.

The constable made a note of everything, and then placed them in his safe.

"Now we'll go to dinner."

"I'm glad you didn't search me at my room. Mr. White would have claimed that money as his."

"That wouldn't have made it so, as long as you can satisfactorily account for it."

"He's got ten dollars of mine already. I'm going to ask Justice Smith to order him to return it to me."

"Why did he take it from you—on suspicion that it was part of the two hundred and fifty?"

"No. He took it because he said he believed that I had been robbing his cash drawer of small sums at different times."

The constable whistled.

"He seems to have a hard opinion of you, even if you are his nephew."

"He never accused me before of taking any money from him."

"I see. The loss of his pocketbook has kind of soured him against you all of a sudden."

"Looks like it; but he never treated me decently since my aunt, his first wife, died. I've been trying to make up my mind for some time to leave him for good."

"You thought of leaving the village, then?"

"I did, but I've changed my mind since I've got that money."

"Yes?"

"I intend to go into business for myself."

"For yourself, eh? What at?"

"Well, I've got an idea that an expresse route between this village and Hampden, on the New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad will pay."

"Then you'd better get a hustle on, Ed, for Buck Nor-

cross—you know Buck—told me that he intended going into that business himself."

"Buck Norcross!" cried Ed. "Why, he hasn't any money to go into anything."

"I met him a couple of hours ago, and he told me a friend had loaned him the money he wanted to make a start."

"He got it mighty sudden, then. He was loafing around the store this morning while Mr. White was eating his breakfast, and he told me then he wished he had a hundred dollars so he could go into business. I asked him what kind of business he could go into on a hundred dollars, but he wouldn't tell me. Buck has got such a hard reputation that I can't imagine who would loan him a hundred dollars on his word, for he hasn't any security to put up."

"Well, I don't know anything about it. He told me he had the money, and was looking around for a horse and wagon."

"Considering that I'm in trouble, he's likely to get ahead of me. There isn't enough in the thing for two to take it up."

"I think you'll have the advantage of him anyway. He'll have a good deal of trouble getting people to trust him with their goods. He's been in jail, you know, and that gives one an awful black eye in a village like this. If I were you I'd go ahead without reference to him. Advertise in the News as soon as you're ready to begin, and make a personal call on all the business houses that are likely to need your services. As soon as you get started I'll speak to people I know and recommend you as an uncommonly smart young fellow to patronize."

"Thank you, Mr. Jones. That's kind of you."

"Don't mention it, and now we'll go into the house and eat."

Ed knew Mrs. Jones well, and she gave him a hearty welcome.

"I suppose you'll be surprised, Mary, when I tell you how it happens that we have the pleasure of Ed's company to-day," said her husband. "The fact is he is under arrest."

"Under arrest!" exclaimed Mrs. Jones, who had quite a high opinion of the boy. "Why, what has he done?"

"It isn't what he's done, but what he's charged with doing that occasions his presence here," replied the constable.

"He isn't accused of killing any one, is he?" laughed Mrs. Jones.

"Hardly. His uncle is the complainant. Mr. White has an idea that Ed stole a pocketbook of his which he alleges contained two hundred and fifty dollars."

"Ed steal a pocketbook! I don't believe it," said Mrs. Jones, energetically.

"Thank you, Mrs. Jones, for your good opinion of me," said Ed, gratefully. "I assure you that I did not steal my uncle's pocketbook. I am sure he must have mislaid it, and will find it before long. Being greatly put out over his loss, he made me the goat because he had to blame somebody. It's been his custom to blame me for everything that has gone wrong at the store, but this is the limit, and I don't mean to give him another chance to sit on my neck."

Ed then told Mrs. Jones about his rescue of Dora West.

His enthusiastic description of that young lady's many charms made the constable's wife laugh, and she remarked that she was afraid Ed had lost his heart to the fair water sprite.

"Now, Ed," said the constable, "I'll have to report to Justice Smith that when I searched you according to custom I found two hundred and fifty dollars in your pocket. As that happens to be the exact sum that was in your uncle's pocketbook, I think we had better call on Mr. West, explain the trouble you are in, and get him to come to the justice's office and testify that he gave you that amount of money at the time you saved his daughter from drowning."

"I'm afraid the justice will have to take my word, as Mr. West went to Boston shortly after I left him and his daughter," replied Ed.

"That's awkward," said the constable, scratching his chin. "When will he return? This evening?"

"I couldn't tell you; but very likely he will, as Boston is not such a great way from here."

"Well, Miss West saw her father give you the money, didn't she?"

"Yes."

"Did he mention the amount at the time?"

"He did not. He just pulled the roll out of his pocket and stuffed it into my hand."

"She could testify to the fact, at any rate."

"She could, but I wouldn't like to ask her to come to the justice's office," said Ed.

"In gratitude for saving her life I should think she'd be glad to do anything that would help you out of the scrape you are in."

"I have no doubt she would, but I feel averse to asking her just the same."

"You must realize that under the circumstances the justice will require that your statement of how you obtained the exact sum of money which your uncle says was in his pocketbook be corroborated."

"That can be done when Mr. West gets back."

"But in the meantime the justice will remand you back to my care until the matter is satisfactorily settled."

"I can't help that, Mr. Jones."

"Well, it's getting on to two now. We'll go over to Mr. Smith's office," said the officer.

Ed's arrest not having got abroad, there was nobody in the justice's office when they arrived there.

Abel White turned up at two.

He at once showed a disposition to withdraw his complaint.

"What did you make it for if you didn't have sufficient evidence to substantiate it?" demanded Smith. "You don't appear very well disposed toward your nephew, who has been living with you a number of years."

"I reckon he took my pocketbook, but I can't prove it," replied the old man, in an injured tone.

"Has your nephew conducted himself in a way to arouse your suspicions concerning his honesty?"

"I've missed money from my till at odd times, but I never suspicioned he took it," said Mr. White, nervously.

"Then why do you suspect him now?"

"Cause he was in the store while my pocketbook was

there, and when I come to look for it it was gone. Nobody else could have taken it," said the store-keeper, doggedly.

"What have you to say to this charge, young man?" asked the justice, looking at Ed.

"I never saw his pocketbook, and don't know anything about it, sir."

"When did you leave your pocketbook in the store, and where?" asked Smith, turning to Mr. White.

"When I went to breakfast this morning. I left it on my desk at the end of the counter."

"You were in the store when your uncle went to breakfast?" asked the justice of Ed.

"Yes, sir," replied the boy. "I always stay there when he goes to his meals."

"Were you alone?"

"Part of the time I was. Then some customers came in and I waited on them."

"Do you remember who the customers were?"

"Yes, sir. There was Mr. Whipple, Miss Green and John Persons—that's all, except Buck Norcross. He was in there while I was waiting on the customers."

"Buck Norcross, eh?" said the justice, who, in common with the rest of the community, had no great opinion of that individual. "What did he want in the store? Did he come to buy anything?"

"He bought a plug of navy tobacco, and then stood around chinning about the hard deal the world was giving him. He said if he could get one hundred dollars things would be different with him."

"He said that?" said the justice, knitting his brows.

"Yes, sir. He said he knew of a business he could put it in and make money."

As Norcross had never shown any great desire to employ his time to good advantage, this statement on his part seemed a bit surprising.

"Hum!" said Justice Smith. "You didn't notice, I suppose, whether Norcross went near your uncle's desk?"

"No, sir; I didn't pay particular attention to his movements while I was waiting on the customers."

"Could he have reached the desk without going behind the counter?"

"Yes, sir; but he had no business to go near it."

As Buck Norcross' reputation for honesty was not above suspicion, it was clear that the justice had some doubts about that person's movements while he was in Mr. White's store.

"Well, Mr. White, do I understand that you wish to withdraw your charge against your nephew?" he said.

"I reckon I do for the present," replied the storekeeper, reluctantly.

"Before the charge is dismissed, your honor," interposed Constable Jones, "I wish to say that I found the sum of two hundred and fifty dollars in Ed Andrews' pocket."

The justice looked surprised, while Mr. White suddenly brightened up.

"I know'd he stole my pocketbook," said the store-keeper.

"However, he explained how he got the money," went on the constable.

"How did you get it, young man?" asked Justice Smith.

Ed told his story of the rescue of Dora West, and how

Mr. West had given him the money, or, rather, loaned it to him.

"I don't believe no sich yarn," said the store-keeper. "How did he happen to git just the amount that was in my pocketbook?"

"It is a rather remarkable coincidence," admitted the justice; "but if your nephew's statement is true it can easily be corroborated by Mr. West himself. Where is he stopping?"

"At the Wave Crest Cottage, with his wife and daughter; but he went to Boston this morning after I saved his daughter," said Ed.

"Humph!" exclaimed the store-keeper.

"He'll return this afternoon, late, I suppose?" said the justice.

"I suppose so," replied Ed.

"Under the circumstances I will continue this examination until to-morrow, and parole the accused in the custody of the constable, unless you are still disposed to withdraw the complaint," said the justice to Mr. White.

"I reckon I won't withdraw it now," said the store-keeper. "I know'd the truth would come out. Maria said——"

"That will do, Mr. White," said Smith, abruptly. "The case is continued. Mr. Jones, you will be responsible for the production of the young man to-morrow. You had better call at Wave Crest Cottage this evening and see Mr. West. The court is adjourned."

CHAPTER V.

ED IS DISCHARGED FROM CUSTODY.

Ed had supper that evening with the constable and his wife, and soon afterward he and Mr. Jones started for Wave Crest Cottage.

They found Mr. West, his wife and daughter on the veranda in company with other guests.

As soon as Dora saw Ed she jumped up and came forward to greet him.

"I'm so glad you called," she said. "We were looking for you."

"Miss West, allow me to make you acquainted with Mr. Jones, the village constable," said Ed.

The young lady said she was glad to know Mr. Jones, but to say the truth she would have much preferred that Ed had come alone.

"Come now, Mr. Andrews, I want to introduce you to my mother. She is very desirous of meeting you, as she wishes to thank you for saving me from a watery grave," said Dora.

Accordingly Ed was introduced to Mrs. West, who didn't look very strong.

The lady hastened to express her gratitude in feeling terms.

Ed then introduced the constable to Mr. and Mrs. West.

Mr. West after that introduced Ed to the other guests, who had heard about Dora's narrow escape, and were curious to see her plucky rescuer.

As soon as politeness would permit, Ed told Mr. West that he would like to see him privately for a few minutes.

"Certainly," said the gentleman, and with the constable they walked down to the gate, but not before Dora had said that Ed must not go away without seeing her again.

"Mr. West," began the boy, "I'm in a bit of trouble, and you can help me out."

"Trouble!" exclaimed the gentleman. "I'm sorry to hear that; but if I can help you out of it you may depend on me doing it."

Ed then told him how his uncle had had him arrested on the charge of stealing his pocketbook, which he averred contained two hundred and fifty dollars.

Mr. West expressed the surprise the announcement caused him.

"My uncle has no evidence against me, and the charge would have been dismissed by the justice but for the fact that the roll of money you gave me this morning was found on me when I was searched by the constable. All I want you to do is corroborate my statement that you gave me two hundred and fifty dollars this morning."

"I will willingly testify that I gave you a sum of money amounting to something over two hundred dollars, but I do not remember the exact amount that was in the roll," replied Mr. West.

"As long as you are sure it amounted to more than two hundred dollars, sir," said Constable Jones, "I think that will cover the ground. Ed bears a first-class reputation in the village, and I for one don't believe him guilty of taking his uncle's pocketbook. It was a singular coincidence that the money you gave him should tally with the sum that Mr. White asserts that he lost. But for that fact Justice Smith would have discharged him, for there was no real evidence against him. The justice desired that I should call with Ed and see you this evening in order that you might call at his office in the morning and substantiate Ed's story."

"I will do so with pleasure," said Mr. West. "At what hour?"

"As you may wish to take the boat for Boston in the morning, which leaves at nine, I can arrange with the justice to meet you at eight."

"Very well. Where is his office?"

"Three blocks up Main street, on the other side. Anybody will show you."

"I will be there at eight o'clock."

"All right, sir. Now, Ed, I'll leave you here and call at Justice Smith's house on my way home. You will sleep at my house to-night, so try and get there not later than half-past ten," said the constable.

"I'll be there by that time, Mr. Jones," replied Ed.

The constable took his departure, and Ed and Mr. West returned to the veranda, where the boy passed a pleasant evening, chiefly in Dora's society.

The young lady seemed quite taken with Ed, and they got on swimmingly together.

He said, if it was possible, he'd be at the beach in the morning about ten to go in bathing with her.

She said she'd be delighted to have his company, for he was such a good swimmer that she'd feel quite safe with him.

Ed then wished her and her parents good-night, and took his way to Constable Jones' cottage.

Mr. West called at the office of Justice Smith next morning and convinced that gentleman that Ed had come by the two hundred and fifty dollars in a perfectly legitimate way.

The constable was present at the interview, and the justice told him to bring Ed around at two o'clock, when Abel White would be on hand.

The officer returned home and gave the boy permission to put in his time as it suited him, but to be back at the cottage at half-past twelve for dinner.

Ed shortly afterward started for Wave Crest Cottage.

Dora was waiting for him, and they went to the beach together, Ed promising Mrs. West that he would look out for her daughter in the water.

The young people spent an hour in their bathing suits and enjoyed themselves hugely.

Ed taught Dora a few new wrinkles in the swimming line, and she declared that it was a first-class treat to have him with her.

She wanted him to take her down in the afternoon, but he told her he had some business on hand, and she would have to excuse him.

After dinner Constable Jones and Ed went to the office of the justice, and found Abel White waiting.

"Have you secured any further evidence against your nephew?" asked Smith.

"I reckon I don't need any more. My money was found on him," replied the store-keeper.

"You are in error, Mr. White. That money rightfully belongs to Andrews," said the justice.

"How does it?" snorted Abel White, in great surprise. "Where would he git two hundred and fifty dollars, iust the amount that was in the pocketbook?"

"You heard his explanation yesterday."

"That was nothin' but a cock-and-bull story."

"On the contrary it was quite true. The gentleman who presented him with the money called here and fully corroborated his story."

"Huh!" grunted the store-keeper.

"As there is no evidence on which to hold the prisoner, I shall discharge him from custody," said the justice, writing the word "Discharged" across the complaint.

Mr. White looked thoroughly disgusted.

He was still more disgruntled when Ed told the justice that his uncle had taken ten dollars of his money from his trunk, when he searched it the previous morning on suspicion that his pocketbook was hidden in it, and refused to give it back to him.

"As I'm not going back to live with Mr. White any more, I hope you will order my uncle to return me the ten dollars," concluded Ed.

Justice Smith questioned the store-keeper about the money, and Mr. White had to admit that he had no real right to the ten dollars.

"Very well, then I direct you to return it to your nephew at once."

"I hain't got no ten dollars with me," protested the old man.

"Then give it to him when he calls on you and demands it."

That closed the proceedings.

Outside Mr. White tried to make up with Ed, for he didn't want to lose his services, as the boy was much more valuable to him, and cheaper, than any other boy he could get to take his place.

Ed, however, had made up his mind to quit him, and wouldn't listen to his proposals.

His uncle had laid the last straw on his back when he accused him without proof of stealing his old red pocket-book, and had him arrested.

The boy had his mind made up to start his own route to fortune, and now that he had capital enough to make a start he proposed to lose no time getting on the job.

"I'll give you another dollar a week," said Abel White, as a temptation to alter his determination, though he hated to yield up to that extent.

"No, sir, I wouldn't work for you again at any price," replied Ed, resolutely.

"It ain't Christian-like to bear a grudge ag'in your uncle," almost whined the store-keeper.

"I don't hold any grudge against you. I am simply through with you."

"You're down on me 'cause I had you arrested. I'll allow that I acted a leetle too quick. Somebody stole my pocketbook, and I thought it was you, seein' as you was in the store at the time. If you leave me you'll put me in a hole."

"I can't help that. I didn't start this trouble. If you hadn't accused me of stealing your pocketbook, and then taken my ten dollars, I should be still working for you. Now you'll have to get another assistant, for I'm going into business for myself."

"Eh? Goin' into business for yourself? What are you goin' to do?" asked the old man curiously.

"I will send you my business card after I get started, and you can patronize me if you think it is to your interest," replied Ed.

"Huh!" exclaimed Abel White.

"It is time that I did something worth while, since my future depends on myself."

"You'll make ducks and drakes of that money the gentleman gave you for savin' his darter. Better give it to me and let me keep it for you till you git of age."

"Don't you worry about what will happen to that money. I expect to return it to the gentleman out of the profits of my business."

"Huh!" ejaculated the store-keeper again. "So you don't mean to return to the store?"

"No, sir. I will call at the house this afternoon or tomorrow for my traps and the ten dollars you owe me, plus half a week's wages. As you may be busy in the store, you better leave the money with your wife to give me."

"Huh!" said Abel White for the third time.

"Now good-by. I've got business to attend to, and cannot talk to you any longer," concluded Ed, nodding to his uncle and walking off.

CHAPTER VI.

ED GETS READY FOR BUSINESS.

The first thing Ed did was to call at the home of his friend Bob Sedgwick.

Bob was something of a carpenter, and had a little shop fitted up in the loft of the barn.

Instead of going around to the back door and asking for Bob, Ed went straight to the barn.

He expected to find Bob in his shop, and he was not disappointed.

"Hello, Ed. You haven't made up with your uncle yet, eh?" said Bob, judging from Ed's presence at his house at that time of the day.

"No. I've quit him for good," replied his friend.

"That so? As you didn't come around yesterday with your trunk, I thought maybe you'd patched things up."

He went the limit this time, and I'm through with him. What do you suppose he did?"

"I couldn't guess," replied Bob, laying down the hammer and looking at Ed.

"He had me arrested on the charge of stealing his pocketbook."

"Go on; you don't mean that," almost gasped Bob in surprise.

"I do mean it. I spent last night at Constable Jones' house."

"Well, your uncle is meaner than dirt. However, you got off all right or you wouldn't be here now."

"Yes, Justice Smith discharged me for want of evidence. I'd got off yesterday afternoon but for the fact that two hundred and fifty dollars, the exact sum that my uncle claimed was in his lost pocketbook, was found in my pocket by the constable."

"Two hundred and fifty dollars! How came all that money in your pocket?" asked Bob, clearly astonished.

"I put it there."

"You did?"

"Yes. The money belonged to me."

"Where did you get it?"

"A gentleman by the name of West, a summer visitor from Boston, loaned it to me for saving his daughter from drowning at the beach yesterday morning soon after you left me."

"Is that a fact?" said Bob, in surprise.

"It is," and Ed proceeded to relate the incident in question to Bob.

"Gee! You're all right, Ed. So you made two hundred and fifty dollars by saving the girl?"

"No, I only borrowed the money. Mr. West wanted to give it to me, but I wouldn't have it that way. I don't believe in taking pay for saving a person's life. Life is one thing that's above financial consideration. Mr. West no doubt considers his daughter of more importance than all he's worth. He couldn't really pay me for the service I rendered him, so why should I accept such a sum as two hundred and fifty dollars?"

"I suppose you borrowed the money to see you through in case you broke with your uncle altogether?"

"I borrowed it with an eye to business. I'm going to start an express route from here to Hampden."

"Do you mean that?"

"I certainly do. I've been figuring on the matter for some time, though I had little expectation of ever realizing my idea, because I saw no way of securing the capital to start with. Now that I've got hold of all the money I need, I'm going to begin business right away."

"I wish I could go in with you, but that's out of the question."

"There's only a living for one in it to start with; but I hope to build it up into a money-making venture."

"I suppose you mean to make regular daily trips to Hampden and back in a wagon, carrying trunks and merchandise back and forth?"

"That's the idea. It's a wonder to me that no such route has been established before, for it would be a great convenience to this place, particularly when the summer boat from Boston has stopped running. During the season most everything is brought down on her, but she only makes one round trip a day, leaving here at nine and Boston at four. It takes her three hours. Now the stage that runs between this place and Hampden carries, besides her passengers, only the mail and express matter and baggage. Often the latter has to be brought here on a special team, when there's a rush of visitors. The store-keepers have had to get all their stuff down by boat, or send specially to Hampton for it if they order it from the city by rail. So you see there's a good opening for a regular express business between here and Hampden, and if I don't tackle it somebody else will pretty soon."

"I guess you can do well at it. You're strong and used to work," said Bob.

"I mean to push it for all it's worth."

"Where are you going to live—here or in Hampden?"

"I shall live here, and make two trips a day."

"Two trips? That's going some. Do you think you can keep that up?"

"Why not? I guess a good horse can stand it, and if he can, I'll hold up my end. My idea is to leave here at seven in the morning so as to connect with the train that reaches Hampden at nine from Boston. I expect to be able to leave Hampden at half-past nine, and get back at twelve. Then I'll start on my second trip about three, so as to meet the five o'clock train. That will bring me back here at eight in the evening."

"That looks like work."

"Well, I'm not going into this thing for amusement."

"I don't see how you'll be able to make two daily trips in winter when there is snow on the ground, not to speak of running into a snow storm once in awhile."

"Oh, it may not be necessary to make a double trip in the winter. I might do it occasionally, then, if the conditions admitted of it, and I had enough business to warrant it."

"You'll have to have two horses, won't you? One for the morning trip and one for the afternoon trip. One horse would soon give out, I should think."

"Yes, I guess I will."

"Then you'll have to have a stable to put them in, and a place for your wagon. I'll ask my father if you can use our barn. It's plenty big enough to accommodate you, and you could board with us, too. How would that suit you?"

"First rate. I'm willing to pay for the use of a part of your barn, and whatever your folks think is right for board and lodging."

"You can bunk in with me, and my mother won't charge you much."

"Well, find out whether it will be convenient to your mother to have me, and ask your father about the rent of the stable."

"I'll ask my mother now, and my father when he gets home after business," said Bob. "Nothing like doing things up quick."

Accordingly, Bob left the loft and went to the house.

He was back in about ten minutes.

"My mother says you can stop with us," he said. "She said there won't be any difficulty about you getting the use of the barn either if you stop with us."

"I'm glad to hear it. I was afraid I might have some trouble finding a stable to suit me. The horses and the wagon will be safe here, and so will any stuff that I may have to hold over night."

"Are you going to have an office where orders can be left?" asked Bob.

"Sure. I'll have to. I'll get desk room in some store on Main street."

"Where are you going now?"

"To look up a couple of good strong animals. The wagon I'll have to buy in Hampden."

"You'll start up as soon as you get your team?"

"Of course. I'm not going to let the grass grow under my feet."

"Well, we eat about six. I'll look for you at supper time. How about your trunk?"

"I'll go for it to-morrow, probably."

Ed went away to look up the two horses he needed in his business.

In the course of an hour he had found what he wanted and bought them, leaving orders for them to be taken to Bob's house.

Then he purchased some feed for them and had that sent, too.

The next thing he did was to visit the office of the Rockhaven Weekly News and order 500 business cards.

He furnished the following copy:

ED, THE EXPRESS BOY,

OFFICE: TIM FLYNN'S FEED AND GRAIN STORE, MAIN ST.,

Is prepared to carry trunks and small packages of merchandise between Rockhaven and Hampden at reasonable rates.

Two trips daily, connecting with the 9 A. M. and 5 P. M. trains from Boston.

Prompt service guaranteed.

GIVE ME A TRIAL.

ED ANDREWS,

Proprietor.

Then he made out the following advertisement to be inserted in the next and succeeding issues of the paper:

• NOTICE! NOTICE! NOTICE!

NEW EXPRESS ROUTE BETWEEN ROCKHAVEN AND HAMPDEN.

TWO ROUND TRIPS DAILY.

Connecting with the 9 A. M. and 5 P. M. trains from Boston. Trunks and small packages of merchandise carried at reasonable rates. Prompt service and satisfaction guaranteed.

ED, THE EXPRESS BOY.

Office: Tim Flynn's Feed and Grain Store, Main St.

By this time it was after five o'clock, so Ed returned to Bob Sedgwick's house, and found his friend reading on the veranda waiting for him to show up.

He told Bob what he had done, and Bob told him that the horses and the feed had both arrived and were in the barn.

"I'll take the stage in the morning and go to Hampden to look up a suitable wagon," said Ed. "I guess I can find what I want there."

"You're a hustler, all right, Ed," said Bob. "Another chap, after working as steadily as you have for so long at White's store, would take a lay off for awhile before jumping into such a strenuous business as an express route."

"Can't afford such a luxury at present. Besides, Mr. Jones told me that Buck Norcross told him that he was going into the same scheme as I've taken up with, and it won't do to let Norcross get the start of me. I want to be the first in the field, and then maybe Norcross will change his mind."

"Did Buck really say he was going into the express business?"

"He told Mr. Jones that he was."

"Where is he going to get the money to open up with? He hasn't got a cent."

"I believe he's found a backer."

"Anybody who loans him money has my sympathy, for the chances are he'll never get it back."

At that moment the bell rang for supper and the boys went in.

CHAPTER VII.

BUSINESS RIVALS.

That evening Ed paid another visit to Wave Crest Cottage.

He received a cordial greeting from Mr. and Mrs. West, and a warm one from Dora.

He told them about his plans for the future, and Mr. West thought the express route an excellent idea.

"You ought to do well at it," he said, "for you'll have the field to yourself, and in my opinion such a route is much needed by the business people of this village. If you need any money, don't fail to tell me, and I'll let you have it."

"I guess I have plenty. If the wagon costs more than I have figured on, I dare say I can get time on a portion of the price."

"Better let me loan you another hundred, for that seems to be the only way you'll accept money from me," said the gentleman.

After some talk Ed agreed to borrow one hundred dollars more, and he got it.

"When do you expect to start in?" asked Mr. West.

"On Monday morning. I don't believe I'll be in shape before then."

"Will you take me with you on your first strip?" asked Dora. "I'll be your mascot. It's a good idea to have one, for then you're sure to succeed."

"Why, you wouldn't ride on a light wagon, would you, to Hampden?"

"I would with you," she replied sweetly.

"It is very kind of you to say so, but as I shall start out at seven in the morning, you are not likely to be up at that hour."

"I'll get up in time to go with you on your first trip, even if you started at daylight," she said.

"Well, if your father and mother are willing you should go, I'll take you and feel delighted at the honor."

"Very well. I shall hold you to your word. You'll call for me on Monday morning at seven o'clock?"

"Yes. You will get back here about noon."

That matter being settled, they began talking about something else.

Ed went to Hampden next morning on the stage, found just the wagon he wanted, and bought it.

He also purchased the harness he needed.

He got back to Rockhaven about seven o'clock and found that Mrs. Sedgwick had kept his supper warm in the oven.

Next morning was Saturday, and taking one of his horses he rode to Hampden, harnessed him to the wagon and got back to the village in time for dinner.

Then he and Bob drove to Mr. White's store.

He packed his trunk and loaded it on the wagon.

He entered the store and asked his uncle for the ten dollars and two days' wages.

The old man handed him the money very grudgingly.

"When are you goin' in business, and what are you goin' to do?" asked the store-keeper.

"I'm going to start on Monday. There's my business card."

"The express business, eh?" said the old man, in surprise. "I reckon you won't make nothin' out of it. Buck Norcross was in here awhile ago and said he was going to start an express route to Hampden. I promised to patronize him, for he said he wouldn't charge me much. You won't stand no show ag'in him, for he's a man, while you're only a boy. People won't have confidence in you."

"Do you think they'll have any confidence in him?" asked Ed.

"Why not?"

"You know what his reputation is in the village."

"He isn't so bad as he's painted, I guess."

"Maybe not; but when a fellow has been in jail for stealing——"

"You was in jail, too, wasn't you?"

"No, I wasn't. I stopped with Mr. Jones at his house. I wouldn't have been arrested but for you. It's lucky for you I wasn't put in the lock-up, or I might have sued you for false imprisonment and got damages. Did you find your pocketbook yet?"

"No, I haven't. If you didn't take it, somebody else did, and is spendin' my money. Who did you tell the justice was in my store that mornin'?"

Ed mentioned the persons, winding up with Buck Norcross.

"I don't believe none of them would take it. Besides, how could they with you there?"

"Buck is the only one I'd suspect of doing such a thing," said Ed.

"Why would you suspect him?"

"Because he isn't to be trusted."

"Well, you didn't see him near my desk, did you?"

"I can't say that I did, though he hung around that end of the room while I was waiting on Mr. Whipple. He was talking to me when the store was empty. He said if he had a hundred dollars he'd go into business and make money. A couple of hours later he met Mr. Jones and told him that some friend of his had loaned him the money he wanted to go into the express business. If I was you I'd try to find out where Buck got the money so soon. You might find some connection between it and your missing pocketbook."

The old man looked a bit startled.

"Do you really think he took my pocketbook?" he asked.

"I don't say he took it. I only say that it's funny how he got the money he wanted so soon."

Having spoken his suspicions, Ed bade his uncle good-by and drove away with Bob, leaving Abel White in a reflective mood.

Ed spent the rest of the day visiting the business people of Rockhaven, soliciting custom for his express route, leaving his card in each place.

A good many people had also seen his advt. in the News, which was published that morning.

Among the number was Buck Norcross.

That individual was rather disconcerted when he read it.

He knew that Ed had left the store rather suddenly, and supposed he intended to quit the village.

When he saw that the boy had embarked in the very business he had in view, he was somewhat staggered.

He swore some under his breath, for though he did not regard Ed as a dangerous rival on account of his youth, still there was a possibility that the boy might hurt him at the start.

"He must have got some money out of his uncle," he muttered. "I wonder how he came to take up with the express business? I didn't say nothin' about it to him. Well, he's only a boy. He won't be able to make it go. As soon as I get started I'll do him right up. People would rather have a man like me take charge of their stuff than an eighteen-year-old kid. What does he know about the express business anyway? Goin' to make two trips a day, too. He can't do it with no horse that steps on two feet. That shows what a lobster he is. I can see his finish right now. I ought to have put an advt. in the paper, too, though I ain't ready for business yet. Well, I'll do it next Saturday. I'll put in a bigger advt. than his, and have it printed on the same page. I'll begin it this way: 'Buck Norcross' Express. The only reliable institution of its kind in Rockhaven. Beware of imitators that promise to do a lot and perform nothin'. Norcross' express will carry anythin' at bottom rock prices. One trial will prove that Buck Norcross knows his business from the ground floor up.' That ought to squelch Ed Andrews and put his express route on the bum."

Ed was on his way home, as he now called Bob's house, when he saw Norcross in front of the Rockhaven House talking to one of the habitues of the billiard and pool room.

Buck saw him, too, and hailed him when he was on the point of passing.

"Say, you've got a nerve, Ed Andrews," he said in a grouchy tone.

"What's troubling you, Buck?" asked Ed, who had a

pretty shrewd notion that Norcross wanted to say something about his business announcement in the News.

"Nothin' is troublin' me, but I guess somethin' will be troublin' you afore long," replied the man, pointedly.

"What do you refer to?"

"You put an advt. in to-day's News statin' that you intend to carry on an express business 'tween here and Hampden."

"What if I did? Anything wrong in that?"

"I s'pose you think you can do it?"

"Yes, I think I can make a success of it."

"What do you know about runnin' an express route? You're only a store boy," sneered Norcross.

"That's one of my business secrets."

"It's my opinion you won't last more'n a week."

"I'm sorry you have such a poor opinion of my abilities."

"I ain't sayin' nothin' ag'in your abilities as a store boy. I reckon you're smart as any boy at that. But you have a nerve thinkin' you can run an express route."

"Suppose I have, you're not particularly interested, are you, whether I make a success or failure of my venture?"

"Look here, Ed Andrews, what put it into your head to take up with the express business?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Because I'm goin' into the business myself, and there isn't enough in it for two."

"If you think that, you'd better stay out of it, then," said Ed, calmly.

"Why, confound your impudence! I thought of the business first, and you ain't got no right to try and cut me out of it," roared Norcross, angrily.

"How do you know you thought of it first?"

"I know I did. Didn't I tell you the other mornin' at the store that I was goin' into it?"

"No; you never mentioned the express business. You said if you had a hundred dollars you'd go into business and make money."

"Well, I meant the express business."

"How could I tell what you meant? I'm not a mind reader."

"I must have let somethin' out that put you on to it."

"No, you didn't give me the slightest hint of what you wanted the hundred dollars for."

"Then how came you to think of the same thing?"

"I've been thinking about the scheme for more than six months back."

"You never said nothin' to me about it when I came into the store."

"It isn't necessary for me to tell people what I'm thinkin' about."

"Well, you're a fool to take up with that business, for as soon as I start in myself there won't be nothin' for you to do."

"I'll take the chances of that. When do you expect to start?"

"That's my business," grunted Norcross.

"You'd better begin soon, Buck," laughed Ed, "or I'll have everything in sight, and then it won't be worth your while getting in on the job."

"That so?" sneered Norcross. "You'll find the boot on the other leg."

"If I do, I'll sell out to you," chuckled Ed, who then walked away.

CHAPTER VIII.

ED'S SUCCESSFUL START.

Ed's express route had been favorably commented on by the editor of the News, who referred to his advt. in another part of the paper, and said that his project would fill a long-felt want.

Before the boy met Buck Norcross he had called upon a dozen or more business men in the village, handed them his card, and told them that on and after the following Monday he would be prepared to carry between Rockhaven and Hampden any package of merchandise, not too heavy to handle in a light wagon, at reasonable rates.

He received many promises of encouragement in his enterprise, for most of the store-keepers were glad to have a daily express route established between Hampden and the village.

In one store a farmer, who was making some purchases, asked him what he'd charge to carry three barrels of potatoes from his farm, along the road he would traverse, to a Hampden grocery store.

"Twenty-five cents a barrel," replied Ed.

"Well, you can call on your way Monday morning and get them," said the farmer, telling him where his place was. "I'm pretty busy harvesting now, and I can't afford to send a team to town with those potatoes."

"All right, sir," replied Ed, registering his first order.

"You might as well take a box of goods for me that Mr. Hickey," that was the name of the farmer, "has just bought," said the storekeeper. "It will be right on your way. How much will you charge me?"

"How big is the box?" asked Ed.

The store-keeper told him.

"It will cost you a quarter, Mr. Pratt."

"All right. When do you leave Monday morning?"

"Seven o'clock. Can I get the box at that hour? If not, I'll call for it to-night."

"The store is open at seven."

"All right, sir. I'll call a few minutes before that time," said Ed. "Well, I've got a dollar's worth of business to commence with," thought the young expressman, as he walked out of Pratt's grocery store. "I expected that I wouldn't have anything to take on my first trip. A dollar isn't much, but it's better than nothing. Besides, it shows that I've made a real start."

Before Ed reached the Sedgwick house he picked up two more commissions, amounting to nearly another dollar, to take to Hampden.

At the supper table he told about his encounter with Buck Norcross.

"Buck is sore because you've gone into the business that he picked out," laughed Bob. "He expected to enjoy a monopoly, and now you'll cut into his profits. You'd better keep your eyes skinned, for he's just the chap to play you some dirty trick to get even with you."

"I don't see what he can do. He will probably run me

down to the merchants when he goes around soliciting business, but I don't think his talk will carry far."

"He can't hurt you that way. He'll try to do it, of course, but you needn't mind that. What I mean is he'll try to work off some scaly, underhand job on you, hoping to put you out of business. He isn't to be trusted, so you want to keep your weather eye lifting all the time."

"I'll keep a watch out for him."

"If I was you I'd insure the wagon and horses. They represent the bulk of your invested capital. It won't pay you to take any chances," said Bob.

Ed thought his friend's suggestion good, and said he would adopt it.

Next morning when Ed woke up the rain was pattering heavily on the roof.

That fact reminded him that he would have to buy a water-proof garment to protect himself against a possible rain storm.

He would also need an oiled covering to protect the goods he was carrying under like circumstances.

It also struck him that he would need a couple of lamps, but there was no immediate hurry to get them.

"It's cost me over the original two hundred and fifty dollars so far to fit myself out; I wonder how Buck Norcross expects to start on one hundred?" thought Ed. "Maybe he's got more than one hundred. It wouldn't greatly surprise me to learn that he is the party who got away with my uncle's pocketbook, and the two hundred and fifty that was in it. I tipped Mr. White off to the possibility of it, now it's up to him to try and find out whether there is any truth in it."

The weather cleared during the afternoon, and Ed went over to Wave Crest Cottage.

He took Bob with him and introduced him to Dora.

Bob was quite struck with the girl's good looks and piquant manners.

The three took a walk together along the beach, which was pretty well populated with afternoon bathers.

They decided to take a dip themselves.

"I won't get another chance till next Sunday," said Ed.

They spent half an hour in the water, Ed and Dora swimming out beyond the end of the life-line.

Bob didn't dare venture out so far, and waited impatiently for them to return.

"Suppose you caught a cramp out there, Ed, you'd be in a nice pickle," he said.

"It would be the first time I caught such a thing, then," replied Ed.

"There's always got to be a first time to everything."

"Miss West would probably have been able to support me back as far as the end of the life-line," said Ed.

"I'd have done it," said Dora, with a confident look.

Shortly afterward they left the water and dressed themselves.

"I'll call for you shortly after seven in the morning," said Ed, after they had escorted the girl back to the cottage.

"I hope you will be up and ready for your ride."

"I'll be ready. Mrs. Buller has promised to have breakfast ready for me at half-past six, and one of the maids said she'll wake me at six."

"All right. It's up to you. I'll be on hand unless the weather is not suitable for the trip."

"I hope it doesn't rain like it did this morning, for I should be greatly disappointed if I missed going on your first trip to Hampden," said Dora.

"She's a mighty pretty girl," remarked Bob on their way back to the house.

"That's right, she is," returned Ed.

"You made a ten-strike when you saved her. Only for that you wouldn't have got your start in the express business."

"That's true, too."

"How long shall she and her folks stay here?"

"Till the first week in September, I believe."

"Where does she live—in Boston?"

"Yes."

"You might get an invitation to visit at her home later on."

"I'm afraid I couldn't accept on account of my business."

"You might hire somebody to carry on the route for a week."

Ed shook his head.

"I couldn't afford to take any chances with my bread and butter even for the pleasure of visiting such a nice girl as Dora West."

"I guess you're right, Ed. If a fellow doesn't look after his business, his business won't look after him," said Bob, opening the gate.

They went to the barn to feed the horses, and when this duty had been attended to they went into the house to supper.

Ed was out of bed at half-past five next morning, and found that the morning was a lovely one for his first trip.

He took that as a favorable augury, and anticipated an enjoyable ride with Dora.

He had the wagon all ready standing in the yard when Bob's mother called him at half-past six to a light breakfast of coffee and rolls.

Fifteen minutes later he was on his way to Pratt's grocery store to take on the box of groceries he was to deliver at the Hickey farm, where he had to call for three barrels of potatoes.

Ten minutes after seven he drove up to Wave Crest Cottage and found Dora on the veranda waiting for him.

"You're looking lovely this morning, Miss Dora," he gallantly said as he helped her to mount to the seat.

"Thank you for the compliment," she answered blushing. "Isn't it a delightful morning?"

Ed admitted that it was, and off they started.

"I'm not starting out empty-handed after all," he said, pointing to the box and bundles in the wagon.

"That's good," she said.

"And I have an order to take on three barrels of potatoes further on," he continued.

"Better still," she laughed. "My father said he felt sure you would succeed in this venture of yours. He said you had the pluck and energy to make your fortune in time."

"I'm glad he has so good an opinion of me."

"I am sure you deserve it," she replied. "When I return to Boston you must write to me frequently and let me know how you are getting along. You know I take a

great deal of interest in your success. I promise to answer your letters promptly, though I suppose they won't be as interesting as yours will be to me."

"Anything you write is sure to be interesting to me," he said, earnestly.

"You said that very nice," she answered with a blush.

"You may change your opinion after you have received one or two of my poor attempts at correspondence."

"No. My opinion will never change except for the better."

Dora thought Ed remarkably gallant for a country boy.

They conversed on various topics until the Hickey farm was reached, when Ed turned in at the long lane and drove up to the yard.

He delivered the box of groceries, taking a receipt for the same from the farmer, who helped him load on the three barrels of potatoes.

Then he resumed his route, and they reached Hampden just as the Boston morning train was coming in.

Ed drove up to the station, though he had nothing in prospect.

He wanted to hand the agent a few of his cards to tack up around the station.

The stage was on hand taking on the mail bag and a number of express packages that had come down by the train.

There were several passengers also bound for Rockhaven.

The stage had also brought three or four gentlemen who wanted to go to Boston by the train that stopped thirty minutes later, which would reach the city ahead of the boat from Rockhaven.

While Ed was waiting to see the agent the driver and proprietor of the stage put everything on his vehicle but a large and heavy express package, which he declared he couldn't take.

"You'll have to send that on by somebody else," he said to the express agent. "I can't handle that nohow."

"Can't you load it on behind with the trunks?" asked the agent.

"No, I can't. It's too heavy for the rack. I wouldn't chance it."

"All right; but your contract holds you. If you can't carry it you'll have to pay somebody to do it for you."

"I'll lose money on that thing."

"That's your funeral, not mine," replied the agent.

"I'll take it to Rockhaven for you, Mr. Owens," said Ed. "Here's my card. I'm in the express business now myself."

"Hello, Ed. I remember I saw your advt. in the paper Saturday. How much will you charge me?"

"Fifty cents."

"All right. Where's your wagon?"

"Yonder."

"Fetch it up and I'll help you put it on."

Ed brought his wagon up to the platform and the box was soon on.

"Deliver it at the express office when you get back. How soon are you going?"

"Assoon as I make three deliveries."

"Good. I often have freight cases here that I can't take. I'll have you help me out."

"Thank you, Mr. Owens. Every little helps."

"Sometimes there are more trunks than I can take. You can give me a lift with them, too. When I have to hire a man to make a special trip I lose money. You will come in handy for me, as you intend to run the route regularly."

Owens handed Ed half a dollar, and, mounting his seat, started off.

Ed then interviewed the station agent, and that man promised to put anything in his way that came along.

Ed delivered his bundles and the potatoes in town, and started on the return trip, reaching Rockhaven about noon.

"Thank you very much for the ride," said Dora, as she alighted at the cottage.

"I thank you very much for the pleasure of your company. Good-by."

He drove around to the express office, left the case, and then went home for his dinner, well satisfied with the start of his own route to fortune.

CHAPTER IX.

IN TROUBLE.

After dinner Ed went to Flynn's store to see if any orders had been left.

He found two letters from store-keepers asking him to call.

He did so.

They had nothing for him to do, but wanted to know his rates and have a talk with him.

They had customers along the road to Hampden, and it was a loss to them often to send their wagons out that way.

Ed made a special arrangement with them to carry all their out-of-town deliveries.

He drove around the village to places he had not yet visited, and caught on to a couple of bundles for town.

There was no especial need for him to meet the Boston train that afternoon, but he thought he had better keep to his schedule anyway.

He reached Hampden at five minutes to five, and found that the train had met with an accident and would be half an hour late.

He delivered his packages and returned to the station.

Soon afterward the train rolled in.

The stage was waiting, of course.

There was a bunch of people for the village, and an over-plus of trunks.

Owens turned four over to Ed, who agreed to take them for a quarter each.

There was a big package of merchandise which had come down by freight.

The agent hunted up Ed and told him he had been instructed by telephone to hand it over to him.

Ed slapped it on his wagon and followed after the coach.

On the way he figured up the results of his first day's work and found that his receipts amounted to \$4.75.

"That's a whole lot better than I expected for my first day," he thought; "but I hope I'll do better to-morrow."

Several days passed and Ed did pretty well.

He knew it would take time for his route to become a recognized institution.

As soon as the business people of Rockhaven got used to the route he would begin to make money.

So far he heard nothing from the opposition express line.

Apparently Buck Norcross was taking his time in getting started.

Buck had purchased his horse and wagon, but he soon found that hardly anybody offered him any encouragement.

He was given to understand that the route put into operation by Ed, the Express Boy, filled the bill.

"He makes two regular trips a day," said a man he had approached for custom. "You only propose to make one, and you do not claim to make train connections. We don't need two express routes in the village, anyway."

"He's only a boy, and is liable to bust up any moment," replied Buck.

"When he busts up you can call around and I'll talk to you," said the man, who distrusted Norcross on account of his unsavory reputation, and didn't want to do any business with him.

On the second day Buck got one small package to take to town, and he looked at it in disgust.

"It doesn't pay to make the trip for a measly quarter," he said. "I won't take it till I get something else."

Buck got nothing else that day and he didn't make the trip.

Next morning he offered to carry a trunk for a quarter.

As this was half what Owens charged on his stage, he got the commission.

So Norcross made his first trip with a fifty-cent load, and he was far from pleased, particularly as he knew Ed had carried a big load that morning.

"I'll have to pickle him," he muttered. "He's got the bulge on me somehow, and I've got to do him or he'll do me."

All the way to Hampden he turned various plans over in his mind for putting his young rival out of business, but none of them seemed safe enough to pull off.

As he neared the town the stage passed him, and Owens, who knew him well, eyed him curiously, wondering who he was driving the wagon for.

He had not heard that Norcross was starting an express route of his own.

Half a mile further on he met Ed, with a number of packages in his wagon.

He nodded curtly to the boy and kept on.

He was unable to scare up anything to bring back, so after spending an hour in a saloon, drinking up the proceeds of his first trip, he started back, feeling that the world was giving him a rough deal.

There was a bridge spanning a wide but shallow creek about a mile outside of Rockhaven.

As Norcross rattled across it an idea suddenly popped into his head.

He grinned malevolently.

"If it works it will do Mister Ed up in great shape," he muttered.

He kept on to the village and looked up no more business that day.

Next day was Saturday, and marked the end of a successful first week for Ed.

Business was increasing, as new customers employed him, and the old ones expressed their satisfaction over his prompt and capable way of doing business.

When he left Rockhaven that morning with a load, he had a copy of the News in his pocket.

As he drove along after the stage he opened it and glanced over its columns.

The following item among the locals struck his attention:

"We are pleased to learn that 'Ed, the Express Boy,' is doing very well with the route he established on Monday. We know Ed, and it always was our opinion that he was the smartest boy in the village. He has taken hold of the express business with a vim, and is pushing it for all it is worth. We can recommend him to any one wishing the services of an expressman as efficient and trustworthy. His advt. will be found on the opposite page."

"I must cut that out and show it to Miss Dora," thought Ed.

Further down in the local column he spied the following:

"Buck Norcross has purchased a horse and wagon and gone into the express business between this village and Hampden. His advt., calling attention to the fact, is printed on the opposite page. Buck says he will guarantee satisfaction to all who favor him with their patronage. Give him a trial."

Ed grinned as he read the item.

"Buck has only made one trip in three days," he said to himself, "and then he wasn't overloaded. I'm afraid he isn't hustling very hard. He'll have to do better than that if he hopes to make a living out of the business."

By this time the stage had disappeared in the distance and Ed had the road to himself.

A mile further on he came up with a farmer's light wagon that was stranded.

The axle had broken and the farmer was trying to repair damages.

A trunk stood beside the road, and on it were seated a neatly dressed woman and a little girl.

They had been rustivating with the farmer for a couple of weeks and were on their way to get the 9.30 train for Boston, but under the circumstances the chances of their reaching the station at Hampden in time was not over brilliant.

"Whoa," cried Ed, reining in his horse. "Can I be of any service to you, sir?" said Ed, addressing the farmer.

"I dunno. This here axle is broke short off, and I calculate I'll have to take the waggin to the blacksmith. Are you goin' on to Hampden?"

"Yes."

"If you'll take this lady, her little girl and the trunk to the station, I'll give you half a dollar."

"All right. I'm in the express business, and I'm going right to the station now to meet the down Boston train," said Ed, getting down.

He assisted the lady and the little girl on to the seat, the farmer helped him with the trunk, and he started on again with an unexpected half a dollar in his pocket.

"It is very fortunate that you came along," said the lady. "I should have missed the train for Boston, and would have had to wait in Hampden for two or three hours for the next one that stops there. My husband expects us up by the morning train, and will be at the depot to meet us."

"I'll get you to the station in plenty of time," replied Ed.

He found the lady a very pleasant person to chat with, and the time passed quickly away.

The down train was just in when they reached the railroad.

Ed helped the lady check her trunk and then bade her good-by.

"I've got one trunk too many," said Owens, as Ed came up to where the stage stood. "You'd better take charge of it. Deliver it at the Grapevine cottage."

Ed nodded, and as soon as it was in his wagon he started into town to make some deliveries.

He got one package to carry back.

Then he started on his return to the village.

Everything went merrily with him till he drew near the bridge we mentioned.

Then a big red object, with a hissing stem, came through the air and dropped into the road.

Before Ed could rein in it exploded with a loud report that proved it was a giant firecracker.

His horse shied to one side and then started on at head-long speed.

When he reached the end of the bridge the frightened horse swerved from his course, brushed down the frail fence and dashed into the creek.

Ed had barely time to spring out of the wagon when the rig struck the water.

CHAPTER X.

THE FORKED TONGUE OF GOSSIP.

There were three persons standing on the bridge at the time, and they witnessed the accident.

The horse dashed across the creek, dragging the wagon after him, which, fortunately, did not turn over, the weight of the trunk probably having something to do with this.

The package had bounced out when Ed jumped.

The cool water and the trouble of hauling the vehicle across the stream, which was not more than four feet deep at this point, took the speed out of the animal, and two of the spectators ran down and easily captured him, leading him up the bank to the road.

Ed picked up the package and hastily crossed the bridge.

"I'm much obliged to you for catching my horse," he said to the two men. "It is mighty lucky for me that the wagon was not smashed and the trunk dumped into the creek. That would have put me in a nice fix. I wonder who threw that big firecracker into the road? He must have known it would startle any horse that faced it. Looks to me as if it was done intentionally. Of course, some boy did it. No man would have been guilty of such a trick."

"I don't know about that," replied one of the men. "I saw a man skulking into the bushes a little while ago, and he had a round red object under his arm. I didn't notice what it was, but since the explosion, I believe it was the firecracker that set your horse off."

"Did you see the man's face?" asked Ed.

"Not very clearly, but I think I'd know him if I saw him again."

"Describe him as well as you can."

The man did so.

It struck Ed that the description fitted Buck Norcross pretty well.

"I wonder if that rascal played that dirty trick on me?" he thought. "If he did, and I could prove it, I'd make it mighty hot for him."

He looked his rig over and was greatly pleased to find that it had suffered no injury whatever.

"That was a fortunate escape I had," he thought as he drove on. "If Buck did that he's the meanest rascal on earth."

He hadn't gone far before he saw a horse and light wagon standing off the road up a lane.

The animal was tied to the rail fence.

"That looks like Buck's rig," he said.

He reined in, got down and entered the lane.

After looking the rig over he couldn't swear that it was Buck's, though he believed it was.

He made a note of it for future reference.

Then he drove on and reached the village without further incident.

He delivered the trunk and the package, and then went to dinner.

At the table he related the accident that had happened to him.

"That was Buck Norcross' work, I'll bet a hat," said Bob. "I told you he'd play some nasty trick on you if you didn't look out."

"He can consider himself lucky that I haven't any real evidence against him, or there'd be something doing he wouldn't like," replied Ed.

As he was starting out on his afternoon trip he overtook Norcross driving in the same direction with a load of empty fruit crates he was taking out to a farm.

He had secured the commission through the purser of the steamboat.

Dick looked at his wagon sharply and saw it was the identical one he had seen up the lane near the bridge.

He was now convinced of Buck's connection with the outrage.

But his convictions wouldn't do his rival any harm, so far as bringing him to justice.

It served, however, to put him on his guard against a repetition of his enemy's tactics.

"Hello, Ed," grinned Buck. "I reckon I've got a bigger load than you this trip."

"I see you have. Got any more big firecrackers in your pocket?"

"Firecrackers!" returned Buck, with a guilty flush. "What would I be doin' with firecrackers?"

"If you don't know I can't tell you," replied Ed, driving on.

"Looks as if he suspected me," thought Buck. "Well, I don't care. He ain't got no proof that I done anythin'. Too bad the trick missed fire. I don't know how his horse went across the creek without doin' any damage to the wagon. I thought the rig was goin' to smash. That would have put him out of business and given me a chance to pick up his customers. Well, the thing failed, so I'll have to try somethin' else. I've got to bust his route up somehow, or he'll come out on the top of the heap, and that wouldn't suit me at all."

Buck delivered his load of crates and received his pay.

He didn't go on to Hampden as he had no prospects of making anything by doing so, so he returned to the village and put his rig up.

Then he went to the hotel and lounged into the billiard-room.

An old crony of his was playing pool at one of the tables, and Buck nodded to him.

After awhile the man quit playing and seated himself beside Norcross.

"How are things coming? Doing much with your express route?" he asked.

"Not a great deal yet, but I look to see business pick up next week," replied Buck. "It takes time to establish a new business."

"How about that chap who started in the same biz—Ed, the Express Boy, he calls himself? He's bound to hurt you."

Buck uttered an imprecation.

"I'd like to do him up. What right had he to start opposition to me?"

"Oh, this is a free country, that's why," laughed the other.

"It's too blamed free. Boys oughtn't to be allowed to butt in where they're not wanted."

"He used to work for old Abel White, didn't he?"

"Yes."

"White is his uncle, I think?"

"He is."

"How came he to cut loose from the old man?"

"How should I know? Maybe it was because the old duffer thought he stole his pocketbook with a bunch of money in it."

"Did White lose a pocketbook with money in it?"

"He did."

"How much money?"

"He didn't tell anybody, or the news would be about the village. How did you learn about it? Did he tell you?"

"Oh, I heard about it," replied Buck, evasively.

"Say, maybe that's how the boy got the capital to start the express route."

"I wouldn't be surprised," acquiesced Norcross, the idea striking him that it would hurt Ed if the news got about that he was suspected of stealing money from his uncle to

go into business with. "It costs money to buy a horse and wagon. I know it cost me more'n two hundred for mine."

"It did, eh? Where did you get the spondulix, Buck? I never knew you to be in funds before. How did you make the raise?" asked his crony, curiously.

"Don't you worry about how I got it," growled Norcross, uneasily. "I borrowed it."

"Borrowed two hundred or more, eh? Where did you find the good friend?"

"Never you mind where I found him."

"Expect to pay him back out of your profits?" chuckled the other, who hadn't much confidence in Buck's integrity.

"Of course I expect to pay him back. Do you s'pose he'd lend it to me if I hadn't promised to return it?"

"It's easy enough to promise," grinned his companion.

"So Abel White lost a pocketbook with a wad in it, and you think his nephew swiped it?"

"I didn't say he did; but him startin' in business right after looks kind of suspicious. Where would a kid like him get two hundred and fifty dollars to buy a horse and wagon?"

"Maybe his uncle loaned it to him."

"If you knew Abel White as well as I do you'd know he didn't do no such thing. He wouldn't lend anybody ten dollars. He's an old skinflint."

"I don't suppose anybody else would lend the boy so much money."

"People ain't lendin' money to kids who ain't responsible."

"Then he must have pinched that pocketbook. It's a wonder White hasn't made a big fuss over it, and taken the horse and wagon away from the boy."

"That's his business. It wouldn't do for me to say anythin' about Ed stealin' his uncle's pocketbook, for people would say I was jealous of him because he was runnin' an express route in opposition to me; but if you was to hint around about the matter it would set folks to talkin'. That would give him a black eye, customers would lose confidence in him, and then I'd get 'em. That would give me a lift, see?"

"I see what you're getting at. Well, if it's any favor to you I'll mention the matter here and there."

"That's right. It'll be a favor. Me and you are good friends, and if you help me along I won't forget it," said Buck. "Come over to the bar and have a drink."

Norcross' crony, whose name was Ira Bunker, accompanied him with alacrity.

They had several drinks, for which Buck paid, and then they went outside.

Before dark Bunker had told a number of persons that Abel White had lost a pocketbook containing over two hundred dollars, and he hinted that the store-keeper's nephew might have taken it in order to get the funds to start his express route.

Nobody in the village had bothered themselves about how Ed secured his capital until Bunker began circulating his insinuations, then they began to wonder if there wasn't some truth in the suggestion, for two hundred or more dollars was a lot of money for a store boy to have, especially when it was now remembered Abel White had represented him to be a kind of charity boy he had adopted into his family out of the goodness of his heart.

In a small village like Rockhaven, news of any kind circulates fast.

Reputations are torn to shreds in short order on the flimsiest of pretexts.

Half of the inhabitants had lots of idle moments, and they were unhappy unless their tongues were on the wag at those times.

By the time that Ed was eating his supper with the Sedgwicks, in happy unconsciousness of what Dame Rumor was saying about him, a great many of the villagers were talking about the pocketbook that Abel White was reported to have lost, and wondering why the news had not been printed in the paper that morning.

The general opinion seemed to be that the store-keeper was keeping his loss quiet in consideration for his nephew.

In the course of several hours Ira Bunker's statement, with its added insinuations, had developed amazingly, so much so, indeed, that he would scarcely have recognized it as his original version.

The fact that Ed had been able to invest two or three hundred dollars in an express route lent almost positive confirmation to the prevailing suspicion that he was guilty of stealing his uncle's missing pocketbook.

Store-keepers who had begun to patronize the hustling young express boy heard the unsavory gossip and began to wonder if there was any truth in it.

Some of them looked askance at Ed that evening when he went around picking up commissions for Monday morning.

No whisper of what was going on reached the boy's ears, however, and he arrived home still ignorant that any scandal had attached itself to his name.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MAN AT THE BARN.

Next morning Ed went to see Dora, and Bob went with him again.

The young expressman reported the results of his first week to the Wests, and Mr. West said he had done fully as well as could be expected.

"In fact, you have done better than I thought you would," said the gentleman. "Rome wasn't built in a day, neither can a business be put on its feet in a week. It's the hustler who succeeds these days, and I guess you have no lack of energy."

Dora and the boys went bathing, and then Ed and Bob went home to dinner.

That afternoon Ed paid another trip to the Wave Crest Cottage, but he went alone, and had Dora all to himself, which suited both of them very much.

He was invited to stay to tea, and did.

In the dusk of the evening he and the girl went off for a walk.

So interested were they in one another's society that they walked further than Ed had intended, and as it was getting late he took a short cut through a patch of woods with the young lady.

Dora finally declared that she was tired and suggested

that they sit down for a few minutes if they could find a suitable spot.

They soon came to a fallen trunk under the shade of a sweeping tree and took possession of it.

Pretty soon they heard the voices of two men who were approaching them.

Ed recognized the tones of one as belonging to Buck Norcross.

He told Dora to remain silent till they had passed.

The men came up and stopped within earshot.

"How much are you going to give me to bring you that quart of gasoline, Buck?" said Norcross' companion.

"I'll give you half a dollar for it. That will pay you, for it ain't worth more'n ten cents," replied Buck.

"What are you going to do with it to-night?"

"I'm going to use it on my wagon."

"Never heard of anybody using gasoline on a wagon."

"There are lots of things you never heard of," growled Buck.

"I'll allow there is. Say, have you heard what's going around about Ed Andrews?"

"What?"

"They say he stole a pocketbook from his uncle containing several hundred dollars, and used the money to start his express business."

"I wouldn't be surprised if he did. He must have got the money somehow," replied Buck.

"I never thought he'd do anything like that," said the other. "He's always had a good reputation."

"That's because he never had a chance to steal anything before."

"It ain't proved yet that he stole any money. Seems to me his uncle would have had him arrested if he had pinched as much as people say."

"I guess Abel White doesn't want to expose him."

"I don't know about that. I've known Abel White a long time, and I ain't heard him speak any too well of his nephew. It's my opinion there ain't nothing in that story. Abel White thinks more of a dollar than most people do of ten. If he lost a pocketbook containing any money at all, let alone several hundred, he'd have made such a fuss that the whole village would have heard about it."

"Well, he lost his pocketbook, and there was two hundred and fifty dollars in it," said Buck, in a positive tone.

"Did he tell you about it?"

"Maybe he did, and maybe he didn't."

"You speak as if you knew it was a fact."

"It is a fact."

"Did he say that Ed Andrews took it?"

"I ain't sayin' whether he did or not."

"He must have told somebody or the yarn wouldn't have got around."

"Maybe he did."

"If Ed took that money, which seems to me doubtful, and put it into the express business, he got away with it more than a week ago. It's funny nobody knew anything about it till last evening. Things generally get around when they happen."

"Abel White hushed it up."

"If he did, how did you know about it? Maybe you started the story."

"Me! What would I do that for?"

"You might be sore on Ed because he's got ahead of you in the express business."

"What he's doin' isn't worryin' me any. I ain't really started yet. When I get goin' there won't be nothin' for him to do."

"Don't be so sure about that. He's a smart boy. Nobody but a hustler would undertake to make two daily trips to Hampden and back. If you'd started in first, you might have got the bulge on him, but now you'll have uphill work trying to run him out. If I was going to bet on which of you two was likely to win out, I'd put my money on him."

"Then you'd lose," snarled Norcross.

"I don't think I would."

"You wait and see. If he ain't out of business afore next Sunday I don't know what I'm talkin' about."

"Maybe you expect to do him some way."

"No, I ain't goin' to touch him. I don't want to go to jail."

"Once was enough for you, wasn't it?" chuckled the other.

"You needn't bring that up. I wasn't guilty."

"That's what they all say. The constable found the goods on you, Buck."

"It was a mistake."

"Yes, I suppose it was," replied his companion, in an incredulous tone.

"There ain't no need to talk about it now. Let's move on. Don't forget to bring that gasline over to my house as soon as you can."

"I'll do it," said the man, whom Ed had already recognized as a small store-keeper named Abbott, who dealt in bicycle and automobile supplies, as a side line.

The men parted, Norcross going in the direction Ed and Dora had come, while the store-keeper turned off by a side path.

"You heard what those men said," remarked Ed to Dora when they were once more alone.

"Yes. It's a shame to think any one would accuse you of stealing a pocketbook with money in it," replied the girl, indignantly.

"I'm afraid Mr. White couldn't keep his loss a secret any longer, and has let it out. He must have insinuated his suspicions concerning me, for he can't get it out of his crop that I took his property, though he knows well enough that the money I used to start my route was advanced to me by your father."

"As an uncle he seems to be very small potatoes," said Dora.

"Now you have an idea what kind of man my business rival, Buck Norcross, is. Do you wonder that I feel convinced he threw that firecracker which frightened my horse yesterday and nearly wrecked my outfit?"

"I do not."

"I also believe he is the person who stole my uncle's pocketbook, for he was in the store at the time Mr. White says it disappeared. He hadn't a cent to his name then, and two hours later he confided to the constable the information that he had borrowed enough money to start his contemplated express route."

"I think he's a dangerous man. You heard him say that if you were not out of business by next Sunday he didn't

know what he was talking about. I'm afraid he intends to do something to injure you."

"It certainly looks that way. I shall keep a sharp watch on him, for he isn't to be trusted. If you've rested long enough we'll proceed."

They reached Wave Crest Cottage fifteen minutes later.

Ed remained half an hour on the veranda talking with Dora, and then bade her good-night.

The clock pointed at half-past ten when he got home.

He went to his room and found Bob in bed and asleep.

It was a bright moonlight night, with a light wind, which rustled the branches of the big oak outside the window.

He leisurely undressed, without a light, and then instead of turning in sat down beside the open window, for it was a pretty warm night.

His thoughts were divided between his express route and the fair Dora.

He could not conceal from himself that he thought a great deal of the girl.

All girls he had ever known paled beside her charms.

She was his beau-ideal of a young lady, and he wondered if she would ever be more to him than she was now.

He was afraid not, and while mooning over her he fell asleep.

He awoke with a start and heard the clock downstairs striking the midnight hour.

"I have been sleeping in this chair more than an hour. I'd better turn in," he said, looking casually from the window.

The window faced upon the yard with the barn at the back.

His glance took in both yard and barn.

He saw a man with a can in his hand and a bundle under his arm, just disappearing around the corner of the barn.

Ed was wide awake in a moment.

The man's presence on the Sedgwick property at that hour looked decidedly suspicious.

"I'll have to go down and see what he's up to. It can't be anything good," he ejaculated.

Hurriedly dressing himself he stole downstairs, let himself out through the back door, and softly walked over to the barn.

Going to the corner he glanced cautiously around, but saw no one in sight.

"He must be at the back, unless he mounted the fence and made his way over to the next street. He might have done that, though I don't see any reason for him making a thoroughfare of this property," thought Ed.

He slipped along the side of the barn and took a look.

The stranger was on his knees before an opening he had evidently made in the rear of the building.

There was a pile of shavings beside him on which he was pouring the contents of the tin can.

Putting down the can he began shoving the treated shavings in through the hole.

"Here, what in thunder are you doing?" cried Ed, starting forward.

The stranger turned a startled look upon the boy.

Then it was that Ed recognized him as Buck Norcross.

CHAPTER XII.

THE CRIME THAT FAILED.

"Buck Norcross, what are you doing?" cried Ed.

The man sprang to his feet with an imprecation, snatched up the almost empty can and flung it at the boy's head.

Then he turned, sprang over the back fence, and fled as fast as his legs would carry him.

Ed dodged the can and rushed to the fence.

He saw that it was useless to attempt to try and overtake the man if he wished to do it, which was doubtful.

He knew the fugitive was Norcross, and that answered all purposes.

He went to the hole, picked up a handful of shavings and smelt them.

The odor of gasoline was strong upon them.

He put his arm through the opening and pulled out a handful of the shavings.

There was quite a pile of them inside.

Norcross' purpose was evident.

He had meant to set fire to the barn, and his object was to destroy Ed's two horses and his wagon that were housed inside.

Had his plan succeeded, another horse, belonging to Mr. Sedgwick, would, in all probability, have lost its life, while a buggy, and much other property, would have been destroyed in common with Ed's possessions.

"The scoundrel!" exclaimed Ed. "He's worse than I ever thought he was. I must bring Bob down here right away before anything is disturbed, and show him the peril we were up against."

He hurried back to his room, aroused Bob, told him to dress and come down to the rear of the barn.

"Why, what's the matter?" asked the astonished Bob.

"Do as I tell you and you'll find out," replied Ed, darting out of the door without further explanation, and returning to the barn.

Bob, convinced that something very serious had happened, lost no time in getting into his clothes and making for the back of the barn.

He found Ed waiting for him.

Bob had entertained the idea that he would see a dead body stretched out on the ground, but on his arrival nothing like that appeared to be around.

"What's the trouble, Ed?"

"See that hole and that pile of shavings?" said Ed.

"Sure I do. How did that hole come there?"

"Put your arm through the hole and see what you feel."

Bob did so and pulled out a handful of shavings.

"Smell them," said Ed.

"Phew! What's on them?"

"Gasoline, one of the most inflammable of liquids."

"Was somebody trying to set fire to our barn?" asked Bob, waking up to the situation.

"You've guessed it. I caught him at it not a moment too soon. Guess who the rascal was."

"I couldn't. Did you recognize him?"

"I did. It was Buck Norcross."

"You don't mean it," gasped Bob.

"I do mean it."

"He saw you and made his escape?"

"Yes. He flew over that fence and ran toward the next street. He's probably some distance from here by this time."

"If you can swear that it was he we will have him arrested. This is a mighty serious matter. Mr. Buck is liable to get ten years for this attempted crime. If his plan had gone through, your horses and ours would have been burned, not speaking of your wagon, our buggy, a lot of other property, and the barn itself. Even our house would have been threatened with destruction. Buck has settled his own hash this time."

"Will you go and bring Constable Jones here, or shall I?"

"I'll go if you want me to."

"Then chase yourself. I'll stay here and watch."

Bob hurried off to get the constable.

He was gone three-quarters of an hour, and he brought Mr. Jones back with him.

The constable had secured all the particulars from Bob, and was quite prepared for the evidence of attempted arson Ed had to show him.

"It's a clear case that a fire-bug has been at work here," said Jones. "Bob told me that you came upon the rascal suddenly and recognized him as Buck Norcross."

"Yes, it was Buck all right. I can swear to that."

"Well, in the morning you must call on Justice Smith and swear out a warrant against him. I'll take it and hunt the man up."

The shavings were removed to a hole in the ground and set on fire.

Bob got a board, and a hammer and nails, and closed up the hole in the wall of the barn.

The constable took charge of the can, which still contained perhaps half a pint of gasoline, to use as evidence.

Ed then told about the interview that he and Dora West had overheard between Norcross and Abbott, the store-keeper, that evening in the wood.

"You'd better call on Abbott first thing in the morning, and you'll find that he will admit supplying Buck with a quart of gasoline to-night. He didn't suppose Norcross wanted it for any bad purpose. I heard him ask Buck what he was going to do with it, and that rascal said he wanted it for his wagon," said Ed.

"I'll call on Abbott," said the constable, who then took his leave, while Ed and Bob returned to their room and went to bed.

Of course, Bob's father and mother heard the particulars in the morning with no little consternation, and agreed that it was an act of Providence which had enabled Ed to frustrate the rascally design.

Ed had to give up his morning trip to Hampden.

After breakfast he went to Justice Smith's house and told that gentleman all the particulars.

Together they went to the office of the justice, and Ed swore out the warrant charging Buck Norcross with attempted arson.

The warrant was handed to the constable to serve.

Jones had already called on Abbott, and that man confirmed Ed's statement that he had sold Norcross a quart of gasoline the night before.

"I did it as a particular favor, for I don't, as a rule, sell anything on Sunday," said Abbott. "What's wrong about it?"

"Nothing wrong about your part of the business, but Norcross used the gasoline for a bad purpose."

"What did he do?"

"You'll learn later," replied the officer, walking away.

When Ed left on his afternoon trip, with a big load, Norcross had not yet been arrested, as far as he knew.

Constable Jones had visited the cottage, where he lived with his married sister, and failed to find him there.

He searched his room, and among other things discovered a faded red pocketbook which bore the name of Abel White.

"So he was the thief who stole this from the store-keeper and got Ed into trouble," muttered the officer.

He examined the pocketbook, but there appeared to be nothing in it now.

It was clear that Norcross had used the two hundred and fifty dollars it had contained.

Jones put it in his safe when he got back to his office, intending to restore it to Mr. White, with an explanation of how it came into his possession.

Then he started off again to try and find Buck.

In the meantime Ed went on to town, made his deliveries, collected several big packages at the station, and came back, arriving half an hour later than usual.

Long before that the whole village had heard about Buck Norcross' attempt to fire the Sedgwick barn in order to put Ed, the Express Boy, out of business.

No great surprise was expressed that Buck should do such a thing.

His reputation was bad, and those who knew him well believed him capable of any crooked piece of work.

Constable Jones had been unable to find him up to nightfall, so the general conclusion was that he had skipped for parts unknown.

His horse and wagon were in the stable where he kept them, and were likely to remain there indefinitely.

Thus Ed was relieved of a rival in his business, though the boy had not regarded Buck as a dangerous factor, for the man seemed utterly unsuited to engage in any occupation requiring push and energy.

At supper Bob told Ed that he had called on Dora that afternoon and told her about Norcross' attempt on the barn.

"What did she say?" asked Ed.

"She said it was most fortunate that you happened to wake up in time to see the rascal and defeat his purpose."

"You can bet it was. I'd have been in a pretty bad hole if my horses and the wagon had been destroyed. I guess Buck has played his last card against me. If he knows when he's well off he'll get out of the State, for he's sure to get a stiff sentence if he's caught and brought to trial."

Buck's desperate act so overshadowed the gossip about Ed that the latter was lost sight of in the shuffle, and nothing more was said about Abel White's stolen pocketbook.

Ed continued to have plenty to do during his second week, and his receipts were three times as large as what he took in the first week.

Altogether, the new express route was getting on swim-

mingly, though Ed found the hours long and the work hard.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ACCIDENT AT THE BRIDGE.

Another week elapsed and summer was drawing to a close.

Ed felt sorry for this, as it meant the near departure of the Wests for their Boston home, and the withdrawal of Dora from his society.

Nothing had been heard from Buck Norcross, so it was believed that he had left the county for his own good, and probably the State.

We have spoken about the bridge which spanned the creek at the point where Buck Norcross had made a dash, tardily but futile effort to bring Ed's express business to a smash-up.

This bridge had been built a good many years, but having been well constructed, had stood the test of time and the heavy weight of the stage coach which traversed it twice a day in both directions for a long time.

One afternoon, just at dusk, the stage was returning to Rockhaven as usual after making connection with the five o'clock Boston train.

Owen carried no passengers or trunks on this trip, for few people were coming to the village at this end of the season—the exodus from the village summer cottages having already set it.

There was nobody on the seat but Owens himself, and in the compartment behind his legs was the express box and the mail bag.

He had taken his time this afternoon, which enabled Ed, following on behind him with a fair load, to almost catch up with his single horse.

"Get up, old nag," chirruped Ed to his horse; "don't you smell oats waiting for you in the barn?"

At that moment, through the calm evening air, came a crashing sound, followed by a shout, which the boy seemed to recognize as Owen's voice.

"Something has happened to the stage," thought Ed.

Before coming in sight of the bridge, Ed caught a view of the creek ahead where it swept around in a semi-circular turn, and he saw, through the gloom, a sailboat, with three persons in the cockpit, scooting over the water away from the place where the bridge crossed.

A few moments later Ed reached the bridge and reined in because he couldn't cross.

The far end of the bridge on one side was hanging down at an angle.

When the bridge dropped the stage had been flung against the railing, which, not being intended to withstand such a shock, had given away and snapped off like a pipe-stem, dumping the stage into the creek, where it lay on its side in four feet of water, the two horses still attached to it, though standing up, and apparently uninjured.

Owens, drenched to the skin, was trying to detach the traces that held the animals prisoners.

"Hello, Mr. Owens, how did this accident happen?"

asked Ed, springing from his seat and then tying his own horse to the fence.

The proprietor of the stage looked up.

"I didn't expect you along so soon, Ed," he said; "but you haven't come any too quick. I don't know how it happened. All I know is that the bridge suddenly gave way and threw the stage, with me on it, into the creek. I never noticed any signs of weakness in the bridge. There must have been a defect in that stringer, or the end has rotted away without any signs. At any rate I'm in a nice pickle."

"I saw a sailboat with three men in it sailing away from here as I came up. It's a wonder they didn't stop to help you out," said Ed.

"They've gone to send on help," replied Owens. "The boat was tied up close by when the bridge went down. The men ran the boat alongside of the stage as you see it and helped me get out the mail bag and the express box, which they took into the cockpit. They said they'd take them on to the village for me, and send back men and ropes to drag the stage ashore."

"Who were they? You knew them, of course?"

"No, I never saw them before, though one of them, who had a handkerchief bound around his face, as if he had a swollen jaw, looked kind of familiar."

"It may be all right, sir, but if I had been in your shoes I wouldn't have allowed them to take the box and bag away, unless they did it by force. You are responsible for the mail and the express box, and if those chaps ran away with both it would put you in a pretty serious predicament."

"You are right, Ed; I am sorry I didn't make them land them on the shore."

"That's what you ought to have done, for you might have recollected that I was coming on behind and could have taken charge of them for you. I can't drive across this bridge in the shape it's in, but I can wade my team over. This is the spot where the accident happened to me, or rather where Buck Norcross tried to put me out of business. My rig went over by itself that day, but fortunately there were three men on the other side who caught the horse in time, and so no damage resulted. I'll drive down the bank now, cross over, and then see if I can do anything for you," said Ed.

The young expressman got over on the other side without wetting any of his packages, the water barely coming up to within an inch of the bottom of the wagon.

It was quite dark by that time.

Owens had succeeded in releasing his horses.

Ed led them up to the road and tied them beside his own team.

"I don't see that we can do anything with the stage without help," he said. "It will have to be lifted up on its wheels, and then maybe you'll find that one of the axles is broken, or perhaps a wheel. This accident happened at a bad time. The next vehicle coming this way is liable to drive on to the bridge, and go into the creek like you did, before the driver notices that it's broken down. One of us will have to stay here and warn teams of the danger. I suppose I'd better do that, as you are wet through, and might catch cold in the cool night air. Take my rig and drive into the village, leading your horses behind. Stop at the Sedgwick house and take Bob up. Send him back here

with a couple of red lanterns, and I'll put one at either end of the bridge. The help those men promised to send ought to be here by that time. You'd better go to the post-office and express office and see if the bag and the box reached their destinations all right."

Five minutes later Owens started for the village in Ed's vehicle, with his two horses hitched on behind, leaving the young expressman to watch at the scene of the accident.

CHAPTER XIV.

CROOKED WORK.

Ed walked to the edge of the bridge, lighted a match, knelt down and held the light at the point where the end of the stringer had rested.

He made the startling discovery that the heavy beam had been sawed nearly through about a foot from the end of the bank.

The weight of horses and stage had caused the slight remaining portion to snap off in a jagged way, letting the end of the structure down with a run.

Ed pondered over the subject without reaching a conclusion until he heard the sound of wheels approaching from the direction of the village.

He looked down the road and saw a light wagon coming driven by one man.

Ed hailed him as he came up.

"Hello, what do you want?" asked the familiar tones of the village constable.

"Is that you, Mr. Jones?" asked the young expressman.

"Yes. Are you Ed Andrews?"

"You've hit it first guess. Get down, I want to show you something."

The constable alighted.

"You can't drive across the bridge, Mr. Jones," said Ed.

"Why not?"

"Take a look and you'll see why not."

"Why, it's broken down. How did that happen?"

"Some scoundrel sawed the stringer through. The bridge went down with the stage on it. There's the vehicle in the water. Owens got a cold bath, but was not hurt; neither were his horses. I forded the creek myself with my rig, and Owens has gone on to the village in it. I remained here to warn anybody that came along of what was before them."

"Lucky for me you did," said Jones. "I should have driven straight ahead in the darkness, supposing the bridge was all right. You say somebody sawed the stringpiece?"

"I do. Come here and I'll show you."

Ed struck a match and soon convinced the officer of the truth of his statement.

"Who could have done such a dastardly thing as that, and what could have been his object," said the constable.

Ed told the officer the particulars as the reader knows them.

"You say there was a sailboat with three men in it lying here when the trouble occurred?" said Jones.

"That is what Owens told me. I saw such a boat sailing

off in the direction of the village as I drove up on the other side."

"And Owens let them carry off the mail bag and the express box?"

"Yes."

"That looks suspicious to me. He was a fool to let men who were strangers to him sail away with such important property. Maybe it was they who brought about the accident in order to get hold of the express box and mail bag. If that turns out to be so I feel sorry for Owens. Both the Government and the express company will hold him strictly accountable, which means he'll be ruined if the articles are not recovered."

"I'm afraid you've hit the nail on the head. Whoever sawed the stringer had an object in doing it. I couldn't imagine what that object was till you suggested the mail bag and the express box. Something ought to be done to overhaul that craft right away. The chances are the boat is out on the Atlantic by this time, bound for some nearby port. As soon as I get back to the village I shall call at the post-office. If the bag hasn't arrived, that will convince me it has been stolen, and the towns all the way to Boston, as well as down the coast, will have to be communicated with. Of course, if the mail bag is gone the express box has gone, too. Here comes another wagon. Maybe it's mine with Bob."

It was his team, with Bob on the seat.

Bob brought two red lanterns with him, and after he had expressed his surprise at the condition of the bridge, the lanterns were attached to a piece of wood and stretched across each end of the bridge as a danger signal.

The constable had important business in town, and he went on, fording the creek, while Ed and Bob started for the village.

Ed drove straight for the post-office, where he found Owens in a great stew over the non-arrival of the mail bag.

"What had I better do?" asked Owens, helplessly.

Ed made several suggestions, and then he and Bob went off to make the deliveries on the wagon, after which they went home, as Ed was mighty hungry by this time.

It was too late to call on Dora then, for it was after ten o'clock.

However, Ed couldn't resist the temptation to run down to the cottage to see whether she had gone to bed, and, if so, to leave an explanation of his failure to show up that evening.

To his great delight he found Dora and her father sitting on the veranda.

"Have you been sitting here all evening?" asked Ed.

"Yes."

"Did you notice a sailboat come out of the mouth of the creek yonder and cross the harbor toward the ocean?"

"Yes, I did; about an hour ago. She had a big diamond-shaped patch on her mainsail," replied Dora.

"That was the boat. Which direction did she go?"

"To the north."

"That's toward Boston. She can't have gone a great way, for there is hardly any wind. I'm going over to the bluff, where I jumped in after you that morning, and see if she's in sight. The rascals who got away with the mail bag and express box are aboard of her, and they've got the

goods with them. She must be captured or Mr. Owens will be in the soup badly."

Ed started on his mission at once, and in twenty minutes was at the end of the point or bluff.

Half a mile away, lying close in shore, was the sailboat.

Apparently she was anchored waiting for a slant of wind, for it had fallen a dead calm.

At that moment he saw a rowboat put ashore from her.

His curiosity was excited, and he started down the bluff in her direction.

The boat entered a small cove and was lost to view.

Ed started on the run, and in about five minutes reached a clump of bushes at the back of the cove.

Looking down into the place he saw the boat moored to the beach.

The three men were on shore.

While one held up a lighted lantern the other two were industriously digging a hole close to the bluff.

"I wonder if they're going to hide their plunder there?" thought Ed. "Maybe they are afraid that they'll be tracked before the wind comes, and they wish to put all evidence against them out of sight, intending to return later and remove their swag. I'll bet that's it. They couldn't do anything that would suit me better."

Ed watched them complete the hole.

Then they dragged the express box from the boat and buried it.

There was no sign, however, of the mail bag.

When they finished their job they entered the boat and returned to their craft.

CHAPTER XV.

CONCLUSION.

Well, the express box is safe for the present," thought Ed. "I wonder what they have done with the mail bag? I guess they've opened that, rifled the registered letters of what cash was in them, and then sunk the bag overboard. If they have done that they have cooked Mr. Owens' goose, I fear. I wonder if the chap who held the lantern was Buck Norcross? I couldn't see his face, but he looked like that fellow. He's got a nerve, if it is him, to hang around this neighborhood when he's wanted for a serious crime."

No good purpose could be served by remaining there any longer, so Ed started for the village.

Ed decided to wake Bob up, tell him what he had discovered, harness up his rig and go down to the cove with his chum, dig up the express box and carry it to the house.

On the way he stopped at the constable's home.

He woke that official up and told him that he had located the sailboat, with the bridge wreckers aboard.

"It's anchored near the shore about half a mile north of the Point. There is no wind, so the rascals can't make their escape. If you'll scare up two of your deputies, Bob and I will join you at the cove in half an hour or so, and you'll be able to take the crooks into camp. I think one of them is Buck Norcross."

Mr. Jones needed no further encouragement to bestir himself, and Ed went on.

Thirty minutes later he and Bob drove back that way in his rig, but the constable had gone.

Fifteen minutes later Ed tied his horse to a tree near the cove.

The sailboat was still at anchor in the same place, for the calm continued.

As Ed pulled a spade and Bob a small coil of rope out of the wagon, they saw another vehicle approaching.

Constable Jones was driving, and he had two of his deputies with him.

A small rowboat was in the wagon, one end of it projecting out at the rear.

The wagon was tied up alongside of Ed's, and the boat carried down into the cove after the young expressman had pointed the anchored sailboat out to the constable.

"What are you going to do with the spade and the rope, Ed?" asked Jones.

"By the time you get back with your prisoners you will learn, Mr. Jones," replied the boy.

The boat was launched and the constable and his deputies started for the sailboat.

At the same time Ed started to uncover the buried express box.

"They have reached her, Ed, and are going on board," Bob said.

"And I have reached the top of the express box," replied Ed, shoveling away as fast as he could.

"Let me continue the good work while you take a rest," said Bob.

"The pleasure is yours. Take hold," laughed Ed.

Bob finished the uncovering of the heavy express box, and then the boys put a rope around it and dragged it out of the hole.

They both dragged it to the wagon and lifted it in.

They returned to the cove in time to meet the constables disembarking their prisoners, one of whom was Buck Norcross.

"Neither the express box nor the mail bag was aboard the sailboat," said Mr. Jones, "and these chaps deny that they know anything about either. However, I discovered a registered envelope addressed to Mr. Bowels, on Main street, so I know they did have the mail bag, and got rid of it somehow. What bothers me is where they have hidden the box."

"That's unnecessary. I've got the box in my wagon."

"Good boy. The express company will probably reward you for recovering it."

The prisoners were loaded on the constable's wagon and taken to the lock-up, while one of the deputies returned to the sailboat to take charge of it.

Ed turned the express box over to the constable, and then he and Bob went home.

Although he had but a short night's sleep, Ed was up at his usual hour next morning, and on his way to Hampden on schedule time.

When he reached the creek, which he had to ford, he found Owens and a couple of men at work extricating the stage.

He told the stage proprietor that the express box had been recovered, but that the mail bag had doubtless been rifled and then sunk overboard.

"The three rascals are in jail, and one of them is Buck Norcross," said Ed.

"So you ran them down?" said Owens.

"Yes, with the help of the calm, which put their sail-boat out of business."

When Ed got back to the village he found the whole place ringing with his praises.

That afternoon a representative of the Boston post-office came to Rockhaven to make an investigation, and he handled Owens without gloves.

He took the carriage of the mail away from him, and learning that Ed Andrews, the boy who had aided in capturing the rascals, had established a regular express route between the village and town, he told him if he could furnish a satisfactory bond he could have the contract on the same terms as those accorded Owens.

Ed took the post-office man around to see Mr. West, and that gentleman willingly agreed to go on Ed's bond for the required amount.

As Mr. West was a responsible Boston merchant, the deal went through, and from that time Ed became the official mail carrier.

Owens' bond was forfeited by the Post-office Department, and the stage owner had to make good to his bondsman.

The express company sent Ed a present of \$200, took the express carriage from Owens and gave it to the boy, though Ed wrote a letter to the manager of the company, begging him to let Owens keep it.

Buck was duly tried and got ten years in State prison.

But a great surprise was in store for Ed, the Express Boy.

On Sunday morning following the event just narrated, Constable Jones met him near his house and called him into his office.

"I want you to take that pocketbook to your uncle with the explanatory letter I've written. I have no time to see him myself."

"All right, I'll do it," replied Ed; "but I don't expect he will apologize to me for his unjust accusation and for having had me arrested."

"Here it is," said the officer, taking the wallet from the safe.

Ed opened it.

"It's empty, I see. Mr. White will have to levy on Buck's horse and wagon to recover a portion of his two hundred and fifty dollars. Hello, here's a flap containing something."

He pulled out a folded sheet of note paper, strongly creased, and opening it out, was surprised and interested to see his father's name signed to it.

The note ran as follows:

"DEAR BROTHER-IN-LAW ABEL: I have heretofore only sent you money for my son Ed's keep and education. As I am about to embark on a journey of no little peril, I have deemed it wise to sell out all my interests here in Denver and send the money to you for the future benefit of my son. I therefore enclose herewith a draft for \$5,000, made out in your name, but which I expect you to deposit in bank to my son's credit. I will write you at the first chance I get, but do not expect to hear from me for some time, as post-office facilities are not good in the wilds where I am bound.

Yours, as ever,

"GEORGE ANDREWS."

Ed was astonished.

So was the constable when the boy showed it to him.

"Show that letter to your friend West and ask his advice."

Ed went straight to Wave Crest Cottage and showed the letter to Dora's father.

The gentleman, after hearing the boy's story of his life with the storekeeper, came to the conclusion that he had better call on Abel White with Ed.

He did so.

"Isn't it a fact that you have in your possession the sum of five thousand dollars, not counting ten years' interest, belonging to this boy?" he asked White.

"No it isn't," snapped the store-keeper. "What put that into your head?"

"This letter," replied Mr. West, displaying it.

Abel White wilted and was obliged to own up, for Mr. West declared he would put the case in the hands of Justice Smith.

The result was Ed found himself worth over \$6,000.

On the first of December he bought out the stage route, for Owens no longer had the heart to run it, especially as there was nothing in it during the winter months.

Ed didn't start the stage till late in spring, when the first summer people began to move toward Rockhaven.

He employed a young man to take charge of it for him.

He now had a regular office in the village, and was running two express wagons on his route, driving the one himself that carried the mail bag and the express box.

The Wests came down early that season, and Ed and Dora were much together.

At the close of that summer he was engaged to Dora, with her parents' consent.

That fall he was appointed agent for the express company at the village, and next spring had so much business that he had to put on another wagon.

Although now twenty years of age, he was still called Ed the Express Boy, and his own route to fortune was an assured success.

THE END.

Read: "THE STOLEN BONDS; OR, HOW WALL STREET WILL MAKE HIS MARK," which will be the next number (262) of "Fame and Fortune Weekly."

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GOOD STORIES.

Contrary to a widespread belief that hard woods give more heat in burning than soft varieties, the scientists at Washington are contending that the greatest heating power is possessed by the wood of the linden tree, which is very soft. Fir stands next to linden and almost equal to it. Then comes pine, hardly inferior to fir and linden, while hard oak possesses eight per cent. less heating capacity than linden, and red beech ten per cent. less.

"Julien Touchard de Mauves, le plus petit conscit de France." Such was the announcement placarded upon the windows of a shop on a fete day in the town of Argentan in France during last summer. By paying a small charge one might enter and look upon this extraordinarily little man. By English calculations he is 34½ inches in height and weighs 44 pounds. Although he appears like a child of four, yet he is over twenty years of age. On the latter account he has necessarily to respond to the call of his country.

Blau gas, named for its German inventor, has come into remarkable prominence lately because of the uses to which it can be put. The gas liquefies under pressure, shrinking to 1-400th of its normal volume at atmospheric pressure. It is, therefore, transportable in steel bottles as easily as oil or alcohol, and is usable in places where gas could not otherwise be readily supplied. For car heating and lighting, in welding and metal cutting tools, for high speed soldering, it is invaluable. It contains most of the same elements, although in different proportions, as ordinary illuminating gas, and is similarly made, but is carbon monoxid, and therefore is non-poisonous. Also, its chemical inertia is so great as to make it practically non-explosive. Its range of explosion is one-twelfth of acetylene and one-third that of ordinary coal gas. It is cheaper to produce than acetylene.

Two newly perfected time and labor saving machines, the invention of which was brought about by the spur of governmental needs, are about to revolutionize the manufacture of all forms of paper money. Under the old plan the individual numbering machines, the individual sealing machines and the individual separating machines had all to be fed by hand. In the new comprehensive apparatus, however, all the feeding is done automatically, and inasmuch as a pile of 9,000 sheets, that is 36,000 notes, can be accommodated in the magazine compartment, it will be possible to operate the machine con-

tinuously for three hours at average speed without stopping to replenish the supply. The new combination machine not only concentrates the operations of a whole group of machines but it does things that have not heretofore been done by any machine. After the numbered and sealed bills have been cut apart it gathers these bills together right side up as skillfully and much more quickly than any human being could do it, and ere it passes them out for the "ultimate consumers" it counts them and apports them in packets of 100—something that has heretofore involved manual labor.

JOKES AND JESTS.

Ella—I have seen twenty-five summers. Stella—I wish I was near-sighted as you are.

Mrs. Askit—Does he mingle with the best society? Mrs. Knockem—No; he just elbows, pushes and shoves.

First Summer Girl—Who is that clean-shaven, handsome boy? Second Summer Girl—Oh, he's an actor. First Summer Girl—No; I mean the other one. Second Summer Girl—Oh, he hasn't any money either.

"Yes," said the drug clerk. "I am called up occasionally to compound prescriptions at night." "Isn't a man likely to make mistakes working in semi-darkness?" "You bet he is! I took in a plugged quarter once."

He—Do you know there is to be a grand ball for charity, and I am thinking of taking you. Have you ever danced for charity? She—Certainly. Do you not remember that even before we were engaged I never refused your invitations?

Three months after facing the parson together they were seated at the tea table. "Do you love me still?" queried the young wife, after the manner of her kind. "Of course, I love you still," he answered. "Now, keep quiet while I read the paper."

The pompous judge glared sternly over his spectacles at the tattered prisoner, who had been dragged before the bar of justice on a charge of vagrancy. "Have you ever earned a dollar in your life?" he asked, in fine scorn. "Yes, your honor," was the response, "I voted for you at the last election."

"Can you give bond?" asked the judge. "Have you got anything?" "Jedge," replied the prisoner, "sence you ax me, I'll tell you. I hain't got nuthin' in the worl' 'cept the spring chills, six acres o' no 'count land, a big family, a hope of a hereafter an' the ol' war rheumatism."

"Life ain't nothin' but disappointment," groaned the Chronic Grouch. "Cheer up!" urged the Cheerful Mutt. "Didn't you git \$50 fer putt'in' yer picture in the paper as havin' been cured o' all yer ills by Bunk's Pills?" "Yes, I did. An' now all my relatifs are askin' me why I don't go to work, now th't I'm cured!"

Mrs. Smith' (of Tooting)—The front steps are dreadfully dirty, cook. Cook—They are that, mum, but the new girl won't clean 'em till her trunk arrives. Mrs. Smith—Indeed. And why not, pray? Cook—Well, mum, she says she never cleans steps unless she's wearin' her best black silk stockings with the gold clocks.

FATE OF THE PENNIES

By D. W. Stevens.

What becomes of all the pennies?

It seems to be with them very much as it is with pins—nobody knows where and how they disappear. Yet they vanish in some fashion. Last year the Philadelphia Mint coined 94,000,000 pennies. It would take a good-sized building to hold so many, but they did not begin to supply the never-satisfied demand for more. Just now the establishment referred to is hard at work manufacturing further supplies, and so it will continue.

Bronze cents are subject to more accidents than happen to any other United States coins. It is said that a penny changes hands in trade ten times for once that a dime passes from one pocket to another. Being of small value, these little pieces are not taken much care of. There are a thousand ways in which they get out of circulation, and thus the minting of them has to be kept up continually. The metal blanks from which they are made by the simple process of stamping are turned out for Uncle Sam by contract by a factory in Connecticut at the rate of a thousand for \$1. As they come from the machines, fresh and new, they look like glittering gold.

One may get a notion of the number of pennies lost from the history of the old half cents. Of these 800,000 were issued a few years ago. Where are they now? A few are in the cabinets of coin collectors. None have been returned to the mint for recoinage or are held by the Treasury. Nobody sees them in circulation. All of them except a few hundreds saved by curio hunters, have absolutely disappeared. Of the old copper pennies, 119,000,000 still remain unaccounted for, save that once in a long while one sees a specimen. There are more than 3,000,000 bronze two-cent pieces somewhere out of 4,500,000 of them that the government issued. Of nickel three-cent pieces nearly 2,000,000 are yet outstanding, although it is seldom that one of them is come across.

In the Treasury department the question came up as to the weight of a dollar bill. Scales of perfect accuracy were brought into requisition, and the surprising discovery was made that twenty-seven one dollar notes weighed exactly as much as a twenty dollar gold piece. The latter just balances 540 grains. However, the bills weighed were perfectly crisp and new. Trial made with soiled notes, such as come in every day for redemption, showed that twenty-seven of them weighed considerably more than the \$20 coin. Every paper dollar on its way through the world continually accumulates dirt, so that after a year of use it is perceptibly heavier.

The actual weight of paper money which the Treasury sends by express every year to all parts of the country is in the aggregate enormous. Since July 1st it has dispatched \$38,000,000, nearly all of it in small notes, to the South and West for the purpose of moving the crops. The banks lend this cash to the farmers on whatever they grow, and thus the products of the field are harvested and shipped.

Speaking of the redemption of paper money, a very novel and interesting application was made the other day to the division of the Treasury which has this business in hand. The story, as it came out, was as follows:

An ingenious youth employed to sweep out a New York bank devoted attention for a considerable period to gathering up the crumbs from the tills in the shape of corners and other bits of notes such as get torn off and fall about in any place where dollars are counted. In the course of time he got

together a quantity of scraps of the sort sufficient to fill a pint measure, and he sent them on to the Redemption Bureau at Washington in a box, with the explanation that they had been eaten by mice. He stated the amount at \$200, and asked for new bills in exchange. His little game was betrayed on the face of it by the fact that the pieces forwarded represented, if anything, not less than \$1,000. The usual affidavit was demanded from him, swearing to his loss; but he had not thought of that requirement and lacked the nerve to give it luckily for himself.

Undoubtedly the redemption division does sometimes get swindled, though not often. The women experts employed to examine the money sent in are wonderfully skillful. It is marvelous how deftly they will poke over a few charred fragments of notes and set an accurate valuation upon them. The other day a poor woman in Ohio sent a wee corner of a \$20 bill, with a pitiful story about her baby's having burnt it. Hardly more was left than a fragment big enough to show the figures of the denomination, but she will get the money back. Mice are great destroyers of paper currency, and some of the most hopeless specimens that come in have been chewed up for beds by those little rodents. Sometimes a pill box full of indistinguishable ashes will arrive, accompanied by a certificate stating the amount represented. Of course, such a case is hopeless. It is usually a kitchen stove catastrophe.

Kitchen stoves burn up more cash every year than is lost in any other one way. People will confide their hoards to them for hiding, and when they are lighted the greenbacks go up in smoke. The greatest sum ever consumed by fire in this country was \$1,000,000. That amount went up in smoke at the Sub-Treasury, but the government was able to replace it at the cost of paper and printing. It has been estimated that one per cent. of all the paper money issued is lost or destroyed. Of the old fractional currency, it is reckoned that \$8,000,000 has been totally lost.

A few days ago an old colored man from across the Potomac in Virginia brought to the Treasury an extraordinary looking lump of metal. He said that it was a lot of silver dollars, halves, and quarters, which he had put in a tin can some years back and hidden in the stone wall of a barn by removing a stone and plastering up the orifice. When recently he took out the box, he found that trickling water had rusted it almost away, covering the coins with oxide of iron and sticking them together in a mass. Assistant Treasurer Whelpley had the lump put into acid and treated with lye and sawdust, so that the silver pieces came out as pretty and bright as when they were minted, and the old man carried them away delighted.

One day a \$5 note on the National Bank of Rhode Island at Newport came in for redemption. On the face it looked quite new, but the back was washed perfectly clean, so that not a mark was left on it. The joke of it is that the Bureau of Engraving adopted the brown back for such bills on the ground that it could not be washed off, as the green back can be. It was intended in this way to prevent counterfeiters from procuring Treasury paper by rendering notes of small denominations blank with acids and printing big ones on them. This is the first time that confidence in the indelibility of the brown ink has been disturbed. Even the seal on the front, which is done in the same ink, has entirely disappeared in the bill described. Whether the thing was done for a jest or by accident the authorities do not pretend to say.

A BATTLE WITH GRIZZLIES

It was in the fall of 1851, and three starving men crawled through a thick growth of Humboldt County, Cal., timber and

to desperation by hunger, the men determined to attack the ferocious animals. The heart of Thomas Seabring failed as the little party drew near the bears, and he sought safety by climbing a tree. The other men, S. K. Wood and Isaac Wilson, threw prudence to the winds and advanced within fifty yards of the bears. Wood fired his rifle, and the nearest bear fell, biting and tearing the ground as though in the agonies of death. While Wood was reloading his rifle Wilson brought down a bear. Five of the grizzlies retreated up a ravine, but one shaggy monster remained with its fallen companions. She sat erect on her haunches and turned her fierce eyes on the men as though daring them to battle.

Wilson, awed by her aspect, ran for a tree, while Wood tried to reload his gun, but found himself unable to ram the ball down on the powder. While in this predicament, the grizzly that had not fled rushed at him. Wood succeeded in getting into a small buckeye tree and used his gun to beat the bear off, as she attacked the tree with the intention of shaking him out of it. While he was engaged in fighting off this bear, Wood, to his horror, saw the animal he had wounded rise and rush toward him.

No blows he could inflict on the wounded animal could check her. At the first spring she made the trees break, and the bears jumped for Wood. He gained his feet and made with all speed down the mountain to where another small tree stood, about thirty yards away. He reached the tree with the wounded bear at his heels, and seizing the trunk, he swung his body around so as to give the bear room to pass him, which she did, plunging headlong down the mountain about twenty yards. Before Wood could, with his failing strength, swing himself into the tree, the second bear bounded up and seized his right ankle. By this time the wounded bear returned, and as Wood fell she snapped at his face. He dodged and she caught his left shoulder.

Then commenced a terrific struggle. The maddened animals tugged in opposite directions at Wood's ankle and shoulder, and he was in imminent danger of being torn to pieces. He fought as best he could, but each exertion he put forth only intensified the rage of the bears. When he was almost fainting with pain the bear that had not been wounded dropped his ankle and trotted slowly after his companions up the ravine. Then the wounded bear let go her hold on his shoulder. Wood sank back on the ground and lay perfectly quiet, as though dead, hardly daring to breathe. The grizzly stood majestically over him, watching for the slightest movement and snarling with rage. The pain that racked the man's frame was frightful, and he risked his life in an effort to assume an easier position. At the first movement the grizzly roaring furiously, rushed at him. She shoved her nose close to his face and sniffed at him, but Wood was again motionless, and the bear raising her head, gave vent to unearthly screams.

Wood, knowing that his life depended on it, remained motionless, and in a few moments the bear trotted after her companions up the ravine. When he attempted to rise Wood found that his right hip was dislocated, and his left shoulder was chewed to the bone, while his clothing had been stripped from his body, and his flesh had been clawed in a hundred places. Inch by inch he painfully dragged himself from the spot until Seabring and Wilson, accompanied by David A. Buck, the latter of whom had been left to guard the camp, found him and carried him to their quarters.

At this spot the party remained twelve days, subsisting on the meat of the bear that had been killed. They were lost in the mountains, but finally Wood, despite his agony, insisted upon being tied to a horse and accompanying his friends in their search for a path to civilization. During the ten days that followed, every step the horse that Wood rode caused unspeakable torture to the rider, but Wood bore it like a

martyr, and an occasional groan was all the complaint that escaped his lips.

Finally they found a road out of the mountains, and reached the farm of Mrs. Mark West, thirty miles from Sonoma, where Wood was cared for, and in six weeks was able to join his friends in San Francisco. The injuries inflicted by the grizzlies made Wood a cripple for life, and eventually were the cause of his death.

BATTLE WITH A COPPERHEAD.

Captain D. G. Colby, a sewing machine agent, whose home is at Volga, Ind., has just recovered from a dangerous illness caused by the bite of a huge copperhead snake, with which he had a most thrilling encounter while canvassing in Orange County, a hilly, rocky section in that portion of the State, which is said to be infested with snakes of all kinds, especially those of a venomous nature. It is a singular fact that Captain Colby, who, previous to his illness, was fair of skin, has undergone such a metamorphosis in the color of his complexion as to be hardly recognizable to his most intimate friends, it having changed during the brief period of his sickness to a tawny yellow not unlike that of an Indian.

"For some time past I have driven a pair of fractious young horses," said the captain, while relating the story of his adventure to some acquaintances, "and use for a halter an inch rope, which I generally carry in the back end of my light democrat. About an hour before entering Paoli, where I was to remain over night, I stopped under the shade of some low bushes to cool off my ponies, as the weather about that time, as you all remember, was somewhat warmish.

"After about an hour's rest I whipped up my horses, reaching Paoli about dusk, and driving up to the hotel barn I jumped out, and was in the act of taking the halter from the hind end of the wagon-box for the purpose of tying my ponies until the hostler could put them up for the night, when I felt a sudden stinging pain in the right arm just above the elbow, and at the same time a tightening sensation as though that member was being wrapped with a cord. I quickly withdrew my arm, and to my horror discovered in the dim light that I had been bitten by a copperhead, and that the venomous creature had coiled itself about my arm, and with head erect and tongue darting from its horrid mouth was preparing for a second stroke with its fangs, when, quick as thought, I grasped the reptile about the neck with my left hand and closed my fingers upon it with all the strength I possessed, when a loosening of the awful compress convinced me that I had strangled the life out of his snakeship, and that all I had to do was to fling him from my arm, which act I lost no time, I assure you, in performing. I stamped upon the reptile with the heel of my boot to make sure of its death, and was unheroic enough to faint away immediately thereafter, and was found a few minutes later in an unconscious condition by the hotel hostler, and with the assistance of Landlord McKnight was carried into the house, when I at once regained my consciousness, and possessed sufficient presence of mind to order from the bar a pint of Bourbon whisky and to drink every drop of it, as by that time I could feel the poison disseminating itself through every part of my system.

"The liquor had no effect upon me whatever, and in a quarter of an hour I threw myself outside of another pint, when the physician who had been summoned put in an appearance and ordered me to bed, where I remained for nearly two weeks under his constant care, hovering most of the time between life and death, and living over in my delirium the horrible experience I had undergone. The copperhead, when measured, was found to be 5 feet 11 inches long."

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